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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 23 September 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. We express our full support for your presidency. I also thank the Secretary-General for his resolute efforts to promote the United Nations and its values.

Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Our world is facing unforeseen challenges, such as climate change and the food crisis. The current economic turmoil also requires decisive action. At the same time, we have not been able to rid ourselves of conventional crisis. Unfortunately, armed conflicts are still a reality all over the world. Too often, we — the international community — are unable to agree on a common response. Too often, people affected by poverty and conflicts are let down.

The need to adapt the international architecture to these challenges is deeper than ever. We need an efficient United Nations to find common solutions for our future. The United Nations represents collective security in its most global form. Finland is committed to building a more secure, fair and just world through a reformed and credible United Nations.

I had the pleasure earlier this week of presenting to the Secretary-General the final report of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy. The main political message of this joint initiative of Finland and the United Republic of Tanzania is that some of the challenges posed by globalization can be solved only through multi-stakeholder dialogue, and that the United Nations could play an important role in facilitating and developing new practices for such cooperation.

Climate change must be addressed with vigour. Otherwise, it can wipe out our achievements in the field of sustainable development and even bring into question the whole future of mankind. Recent extreme weather phenomena can be a serious indication of the challenges we are about to face. Multilateral engagement and shared responsibility are the only effective means to tackle this global menace. Others' indifference is no excuse for inaction. Climate change is a matter of our responsibility to future generations. There is no place for petty politics or recrimination.

The United Nations has to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. We must reach a

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comprehensive global agreement on a new international climate regime. The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference will take place in December next year. It is evident that global commitments need to be implemented and also supplemented by national and regional action. It is important to include all stakeholders, from non-governmental organizations to private enterprises, and from individual citizens to Governments. We need everybody; it is necessary that women too can participate fully in this work.

Industrialized countries have to bear their share in mitigating climate change. However, international negotiations on the new climate regime cannot succeed without extensive participation by the developing countries. We must actively support the most vulnerable developing countries in adapting to and combating climate change.

There is mounting evidence that poverty, especially in rural areas, can be reduced by sustainable management of natural resources. Forests are crucial in reducing greenhouse gases. Finland has a long history of sustainable forest management, and we understand its impact on rural development and employment. We would like the United Nations to intensify its efforts to assist Governments and communities to improve their capacities for rural development and sustainable forest management. We are of course ready to work with others in this respect.

I am pleased to be a co-host, together with the President of Liberia, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, my friend, of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, to be held in Liberia next March. The conference will address women's role in climate change, security, governance and leadership.

Rising food prices are a challenge with worldwide consequences. Once again the poorest and the most vulnerable — women and children — suffer the most. Food shortages lead to deterioration of diets, and can provoke social unrest. Effective Government action and improved donor coordination are crucial in tackling the food crisis. The United Nations Comprehensive Framework for Action is an excellent initiative in addressing this global challenge.

Parallel to the short-term response, attention must be paid to medium- and long-term policies in enhancing food security. Support for the rural sector is crucial for sustainable and equitable development, growth and well-being. Moreover, the promotion of good agricultural practices is among the best approaches to adaptation to climate change.

This food issue can also provide opportunities. If developing countries are supported in the spirit of the Aid for Trade agenda, they can better take advantage of their agricultural potential, including exporting. And we need to ensure, again, that both women and men benefit from support, keeping in mind that women produce most of the food in many developing countries.

The United Nations currently deploys well over 100,000 military and civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations. This is a remarkable figure, and we, the Member States, must continue to support the United Nations efforts in this field. The United Nations and regional organizations should work closer together in carrying the burden in preventing and resolving conflicts.

Increased cooperation should be extended to the African Union. We already have good cooperation and experience in our own region, because improving efficiency and improving cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations remain a top priority. In Kosovo, and most recently also in Georgia, we continue close cooperation between the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

That is why I also dare to say that increased cooperation should be extended to the African Union. A continued United Nations peacekeeping presence in Chad and in the Central African Republic would contribute to wider stabilization efforts, both locally and regionally.

Tackling today's multifold conflicts requires a comprehensive approach to security. Trade, development policy and humanitarian aid need to be utilized alongside traditional crisis management tools. We must — even better than today — take women and children into account in conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding.

We have made good decisions. We have to make them become reality. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that last Friday Finland published a national action plan on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). We hope that more and more member countries will do the same.

Furthermore, there can be no sustainable peace without justice. Finland strongly supports the International Criminal Court in rejecting impunity for the most serious international crimes.

Finally, I want to share my memories and experience. I had the privilege to co-preside over the Millennium Summit with President Sam Nujoma of Namibia eight years ago. We witnessed leaders having the spirit and the courage to adopt the Millennium Declaration and to make a commitment on the Millennium Development Goals. It is our duty to fulfil these commitments. Africa requires our devoted attention and support, as was agreed yesterday. Let us work for it, because today, in this Hall, it is once again time to pledge our joint commitment to the ideas and values of the United Nations.

Everyone present may remember what the Charter calls us to do: "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". While the concept of security has changed and become broader, the onus is on us to follow this call of the Charter and translate it into action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Silajdžić: It is an honour to address the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

Allow me to express my gratitude to Mr. Srgjan Kerim, who ably presided over the Assembly during the preceding year, and to congratulate you, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, the new President of the General Assembly. I also thank you, Sir, for an inspiring appeal for respect for basic, universal ethical values.

The first time I stood at this rostrum was in May 1992, as the Foreign Minister of a newly independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time, I recounted the unspeakable atrocities that were unfolding in my country. I also warned that, if not stopped, such atrocities would only get worse. In fact, I merely asked that Bosnia and Herzegovina be accorded the right to defend itself, the right guaranteed by the Charter.

We know what has happened since. Some in the international community insisted on maintaining the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in 1991, thus adding to the obviously overwhelming military advantage of Milosevic's regime, which was bent on destroying Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people. They justified this course by claiming that lifting the arms embargo meant adding oil to the fire. The result was that the fire was quelled with the blood of the innocent.

According to International Committee of the Red Cross data, 200,000 people — 12,000 of them children — were killed, up to 50,000 women were raped, and 2.2 million people were forced to flee their homes. This was a veritable genocide and sociocide. The intent of the perpetrators of this genocide was to forever destroy the unique multi-ethnic fabric of Bosnia and Herzegovina through mass slaughter, rape, torture, abuse, expulsion and plunder. In spite of this, defenders of our country conducted themselves honourably, as demonstrated by the acquittal by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of most of Bosnia and Herzegovina's military leadership.

All this culminated in Srebrenica in July 1995. The International Court of Justice — the court of this Organization — ruled in its Judgment of 26 February 2007 that "the Bosnian Serbs devised and implemented a plan to execute as many as possible of the military aged Bosnian Muslim men present in the enclave" (*para. 292*) and that

> "the acts committed at Srebrenica ... were committed with the specific intent to destroy in

> part the group of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina as such; and accordingly ... these were acts of genocide, committed by members of the [Army of Republika Srpska] in and around Srebrenica from about 13 July 1995." (*para. 297*)

Through its acts and omissions, the United Nations, by its own admission, bears part of the responsibility for the crimes committed at Srebrenica. In fact, the Secretary-General's 1999 report on Srebrenica unequivocally states:

> "Through error, misjudgement and an inability to recognize the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to help save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder ... Srebrenica crystallized a truth understood only too late by the United Nations and the world at large: that Bosnia was as much a moral cause as a military conflict. The tragedy of Srebrenica will haunt our history forever." (*A/54/549, para. 503*)

We do not want the United Nations to be haunted. This Organization's credibility is too important to the world to carry the burden of this failure. Errors can be committed, but errors must not be repeated. We want the United Nations to right the wrongs. In fact, international law mandates that this must be done. The International Law Commission's articles on State responsibility for internationally wrongful acts, adopted in resolution 56/83 of 12 December 2001, mandate that "No State shall recognize as lawful a situation created by a serious breach [of a peremptory norm of general international law]", which clearly includes the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity, "nor render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation" (*article 41*).

If those principles had been applied, would the institutions identified by the International Court of Justice as perpetrators of genocide still exist? Would vast portions of a country remain ethnically clean? Would over a million refugees and displaced persons remain outside their homes? In short, do these principles allow for the arrest of Karadzic and the simultaneous preservation of the results of his project? In fact, just today The Hague Tribunal announced a revised indictment against Karadzic that charges him with genocide and crimes against humanity, against both Bosnians and Croats in 27 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This process will further implicate the Milosevic regime in the planning and commission of those crimes.

We cannot bring back the dead, but we can give dignity and justice to the survivors. What we say today is aimed not at the past, but at the future, and not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We owe it to not only the victims and survivors, but humanity as a whole. The message to the would-be perpetrators of crimes in the name of a twisted ideology should be crystal-clear: do not even think about it; your terror will not pay off. That should be the message.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we had the opportunity to make that true by a consistent implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the aggression, stopped the genocide, and brought peace. These were its major accomplishments, and their value cannot be overemphasized.

The Dayton Peace Agreement, however, was also intended to reverse the effects of genocide and ethnic cleansing. It had all the necessary elements to do so. Instead, in the words of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its main provisions have been a victim of:

> "a systemic, continuing and deliberate practice of the public authorities of Republika Srpska with the goal of preventing the so-called minority returns, either through direct participation in violent incidents or through the abdication of responsibility to protect the people from ... violent attacks due solely to their ethnic background".

Dayton never intended such ethnic apartheid to take root in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is not the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but the violation of its core principles, that led to this result. It would be a grave mistake to recognize this result as lawful and legitimate. It is the responsibility of this Organization to make it right. Just as we should not have been forced to smuggle arms into our own country to defend ourselves, we should not be forced now to smuggle basic human rights, justice and democracy into Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Without righting this wrong can we genuinely celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this December? Moreover, can we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the

Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide if the first and only Judgment of the International Court of Justice on the crime of genocide remains in the Court's archives?

Now is the time to right these wrongs. We are about to start work on the new Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the outcome of that process will answer many of these questions.

To those who now seek to legitimize the systemic violations of the Dayton Peace Agreement, we all must say: make no mistake, genocide will not be rewarded. That is the responsibility of this Organization. Rewarding genocide would send a dangerous message throughout the world, and would surely undermine the chances of peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

Seekers of justice are not the enemies of peace. They are the guardians of peace. As the Secretary-General said today, justice is the pillar of peace and stability. That is what this statement is all about. Certainly, there are those in Bosnia and Herzegovina who would not agree, but they are surely not the victims of genocide.

We have not forgotten the help we received from many of the countries represented here today, a number of whose soldiers, diplomats, aid workers and journalists died in Bosnia and Herzegovina while working to end the aggression, bring peace and ease the suffering, or to make sure that the rest of the world knew about it. For that we thank them once again, and renew our sympathy to their families.

An even greater number of countries have assisted us in rebuilding our society after the aggression, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for that as well. Bosnia and Herzegovina still needs help in this regard, and we hope that we can work together in order to ensure permanent peace and stability in my country, the region and the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: We are gathered here once again to reflect on major national, regional and global challenges — and on how together, as the United Nations, we can renew our commitment to finding solutions. It gives me great pleasure to share with the General Assembly some insights on how some of those global developments affect Rwanda, as well as our region, as we continue to strengthen our social, economic and democratic institutions for improving the lives of our citizens.

In the context of fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, our second-generation poverty-reduction strategy is gathering momentum in Africa, East Africa and Rwanda, and is being implemented in the context of greater stability and peace. In Rwanda we are registering a healthy economic growth rate, which is currently averaging 7 per cent annually, in an increasingly open and conducive environment that encourages domestic and foreign investors. We also continue to deepen our regional integration in the East African community. That is essential for a bigger and more dynamic market, which should become a far more effective and efficient gateway to global business.

With regard to empowering women and promoting their socio-economic and political participation, we continue to make significant progress. In the just-concluded Rwandan parliamentary elections for the lower chamber, women candidates performed exceptionally well, increasing their presence in the new Parliament from 49 to 55 seats. We believe that, besides improving gender status in our country, that marks healthy progress towards realizing a vision of a united, democratic and prosperous Rwanda.

Allow me to raise another issue that may have wider implications, namely, that of justice and, more specifically, of universal jurisdiction and its abuse. It is important that those who consider themselves powerful nations do not misuse that tool of international justice to extend their laws and jurisdiction over those they perceive to be weaker countries. If unchecked, one can only imagine the legal chaos that would ensue should any judge in any country decide to apply local laws to other sovereign States. The United Nations has a duty to ensure that universal jurisdiction serves its original goals of delivering international justice and fairness, as opposed to abuse.

There is no doubt that climate change is among the critical challenges of our time. Africa is being gravely affected. Deserts and dry zones continue to claim more territory. Over-reliance on wood for energy by our populations is leading to severe deforestation. Furthermore, unpredictable weather and rainfall patterns, combined with limited scientific and technological capacities, are already undermining our continent's ability to effectively manage water resources.

We take those challenges very seriously in Rwanda. Earlier this month, in Kigali, the Africa Climate Change Forum brought together policymakers, business leaders and academic and scientific communities from different parts of the world. They reaffirmed that the world community urgently needs to think globally, but also to act locally, in translating resolutions into actions. Towards that end, we are determined to intensify efforts in the areas of reforestation, terracing and irrigation for more effective use of water and land resources, as well as to prevent soil erosion. It is indispensable that we partner together as a global community to urgently act to protect our planet in the context of the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

Rwanda is committed to regional and global peace and stability. Let us not forget that the process of comprehensively resolving the issue of those who committed genocide in Rwanda has yet to be completed. We stand ready to play our part in addressing that matter in the context of broader objectives to consolidate stability and peace on our continent. Once again, I assure the Assembly of our determination and commitment to creating a safer and better world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: First, I would like to express my great respect to the leadership of the General Assembly as it guides the Organization through global issues and challenges.

When I stood at this podium 10 years ago, the list of issues to be urgently addressed was about the same, yet the mood was different. The Kyoto Protocol had just been signed and preparations for the Millennium Summit, including the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, were under way. The international community, guided by the principles and the leadership of the United Nations, showed the will and the ambition to resolve global issues.

But did we manage to turn that collective will into principled and decisive actions? I have to admit that many nations, big and small, have many more concerns today than they did a decade ago. Today we feel less secure. The very structure of the international system seems to be fracturing, depriving us of the protection provided by international law and international institutions. In my region, in Eastern Europe and in the eastern neighbourhood of the European Union (EU), that is more obvious than anywhere else.

Take energy security: oil supplies to Lithuania have been cut off without warning, and we do not stand a chance of conducting a normal civilized dialogue on how to fix the problem. Gas supplies were interrupted to our neighbours Ukraine and Belarus. In that light, and on the eve of closing down our only independent power generator, we have very serious reason to worry about the possible risks for the future of our economy. I would also say that other countries of our region also have concerns about unreliable energy supplies. Such a situation threatens the stability of the entire region. The United Nations cannot be a mere passive observer if, and when, universal values and international law are under threat. Too often, we remain observers in the face of mounting security crises.

What happened to Georgia a few months ago is a case in point. The United Nations largely failed to react to an act of aggression against a small nation that has been a Member of the United Nations since 1992. Perhaps we failed to react because one of the interested sides to the conflict is a permanent member of the Security Council, which has the responsibility to protect both the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and various United Nations resolutions.

But maybe we also failed to react because our faith in the United Nations has weakened. It is the very essence of the Organization's mission to protect human life and human rights, but too often voting on human rights receives less and less support from Member States. Today, there are still about 26 million internally displaced persons in the world, including in the Sudan, Somalia, the South Caucasus nations of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and other places. Last year alone, we faced serious crises in different corners of the planet, including in Myanmar, the Sudan and Zimbabwe. The world needed United Nations leadership, but the Organization has not acted accordingly. That is because some States hide behind technicalities or the shield of national sovereignty, thereby paralysing the United Nations.

It is quite evident that the United Nations cannot continue with business as usual. It needs reform and a greater role in areas that will determine the future of the twenty-first century, such as energy, information security, anti-terrorism, the fight against fundamentalism and the like. How long will we continue with cold-war-era security definitions, closing our eyes to the less visible, but no less dangerous dangers of the twenty-first century? When 17 years ago, following the Soviet occupation, my country regained independence and joined the United Nations, we were told that never again would Molotovs and Ribbentrops dare to decide the future of other nations. Next year we will mark the seventieth anniversary of the shameful Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocols.

But Lithuania and other nations of the former Soviet Union still have to fight against the revisionism seeping down from the Kremlin's towers and the blatant claims that there was no occupation of the Baltic States and that there was no Holodomor in Ukraine, where millions of people were starved to death by a ruthless dictator. Should not an alarm bell ring across the entire international community when we see such bold attempts to cover up crimes against humanity?

Today, my nation is commemorating the Day of Genocide of Lithuanian Jews. That tragedy is a powerful reminder to us all of the vulnerability of freedom, but it also teaches us that sincere efforts to admit one's crimes help nations to reconcile and create a truly peaceful, secure and stable area. Therefore, on this solemn day we not only remember but we also learn.

If we are to reform the United Nations in a meaningful way, perhaps we should have a better look at the experience of European nations after the end of the Second World War and the end of the cold war. Based on that experience, it is obvious that we need to strengthen democracy at home in order to have good governance and responsible leadership. Perhaps responsible leaders will not protect us from all global challenges, but they will at least seek cooperation with their people and other nations to resolve their persisting problems.

It is only through integration that truly indivisible security can be achieved. Indivisible security has special meaning and importance for smaller nations, which have all too often fallen victim to the redrawing of maps. It is my conviction that the interaction of, and cooperation among, different organizations — like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, EU, NATO and the Council of Europe — have been, and should remain, the foundation for security and stability in Europe. There are difficulties and deficiencies; but there is no alternative, and new alternatives are not needed. I am therefore deeply

worried by new calls to revise the institutional structure of European security, rather than to abide by commitments undertaken before the whole international community.

Security based on cooperation should remain the basic principle of different European organizations and of international relations as a whole. The philosophy of the balance of power, which is again growing popular in some capitals, has no place in contemporary Europe. And because security is indivisible, it is in the interest of the international community that the United Nations should play a greater role in strengthening preventive diplomacy and making the principle of the responsibility to protect work.

The United Nations also has to be more responsive to emerging threats, such as unreliable energy supplies, fundamentalism and cyber attacks. It does not matter if the world is unipolar, bipolar or multipolar. Human life and human rights remain at the heart of our world. Only such a world can create a truly viable architecture among States — an architecture based on trust, openness and respect for human rights. But did we see efforts to create such an architecture in the Georgia-Russia conflict? What we saw instead were renewed attempts to divide the world into zones of influence or privileged interests. That should be unacceptable to the international community in the twenty-first century. Division and exclusion are bad remedies for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and elsewhere should therefore be the responsibility of the international community and international institutions, not of one participating side, which hardly remains impartial.

We also have to maintain commitments to value-based policies. It is through our commitment to change and reform that Lithuania has become what it is today: a consolidated democracy, a strong reformed economy and an active contributor to international peacekeeping missions from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

I believe that we, the peoples of the United Nations, have to renew our commitment to universal values and principles, so that we march together and in the same direction and our steps become stronger. I believe that we must learn those lessons well, so that in another 10-years' time we can celebrate not only the fulfilled promise of the Millennium Development Goals but also the fulfilled promise of creating lasting peace and an era of progress, prosperity and human integrity. It is because the United Nations consists primarily not of the sum total of votes but of universal principles that those principles shall be a guiding light for us in the years to come. I still believe that that is the core mission of the Organization. I care deeply about it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmadinejad (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I am grateful to the Almighty for granting me another opportunity to be present at this world Assembly. In the past three years, I have talked to the Assembly about great hopes in the bright future of human society and about some solutions for achieving sustainable peace and expanding love, compassion and cooperation. I have also talked about unjust systems governing the world; pressures exerted by some Powers seeking to trample the rights of other nations; oppression imposed on the majority of the global community, especially on the peoples of Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Africa, Latin America and Asia; about challenges we are faced with, such as efforts to shatter the sanctity of families, destroy cultures, humiliate lofty values, neglect commitments and expand the shadow of threats; as well as about the arms race and the unfairness and inability of the systems governing world affairs to reform the status quo.

With the emergence of various new developments, the debility of existing mechanisms has been revealed even more starkly. However, at the same time an encouraging trend, originating in the thoughts and beliefs of peoples, has blossomed and become stronger. Against the backdrop of the despair caused by the new developments, that trend has ignited a glimmer of hope in the hearts of men for a brilliant, desirable and beautiful future.

Today, I would like to talk to the Assembly about the main reasons behind the conditions ruling the world and the means to address them. Of course, the Assembly is already aware of what I am talking about, but I think it is necessary to remind ourselves. It seems that the roots of problems lie in the way one views and perceives the world and humankind, as well as in the important issues of freedom, obeisance to God, and justice. The world, humankind, freedom, obeisance to God, and justice have been of the utmost importance to humans throughout history.

God Almighty purposefully created the world. The world is the bedrock for the evolution and growth of a creature called man, and the laws governing the world and all other creatures are at the service of humankind's quest for loftiness. The world should provide the needed opportunities for the fulfilment of the purpose behind humankind's creation. No phenomenon, creature or, indeed, anything has been created in vain. Together they all pave the way for the flourishing of humankind in a complex and purposeful system, and they are each one of the signs of God Almighty. All are His creations and He is the sole creator and ruler of the world. All existence, including power, knowledge and wealth, comes from Him.

With regard to humankind, God created the world for humans, and humans for Himself. He created humans from mud and in the soil, but He did not want them to remain in the soil or with animal instincts. He kindled the light of guidance in their souls and asked them to rise from the soil to the heavens and to Him with the help of wisdom, prophets and perfect men.

The world will ultimately disappear, but God has created humankind for eternity and has made it a manifestation of Himself. Creativity, mercifulness, kindness, knowledge, wisdom, zeal, compassion, splendor, justice, bounteousness, generosity, greatness, love, glory, dignity, forgiveness, insight, kingship and all other goodness and beauty are attributes of God. God did not create humans for aggression, bloodshed, rancour, selfishness and destruction. He made humans His vicegerents on Earth and has asked them, on the one hand, to make Earth prosper by using their God-given potentials, to prepare the ground for the growth of divine attributes in all humans and to provide all with a life full of beauty, amity, freedom, justice and goodness; and, on the other hand, in pursuance of that path, to prepare for a prosperous, everlasting life endowed by God's mercy. God has obligated humans to live divinely and socially, for it is only through social life and interactions with others that divine attributes can emerge.

With regard to obeisance to God, God Almighty has tied the perfection and true freedom of humans to the devotion and obedience to Himself. True freedom and obedience to God are in balance, and in fact are two sides of the same coin. Obeisance to God means confessing to monotheism, obeying His commands, and being free from ungodly worship. Obeisance to God means the acceptance of the absolute truth, the absolute light and the absolute beauty. Obeisance to God means abandoning selfishness, animal instincts, power-seeking and aggression and surrendering to righteousness, justice, love and perfection.

In that way, humans can achieve their true freedom and flourish. They can grow and manifest divine attributes, have affection for others, stand up for justice, fear no power or threat and defend the oppressed. In such an environment, one's freedom will not impinge on any others'. Contention and conflict are characteristic of materialistic freedom and animal instinct. The essence of all divine religions and obeisance to God and true freedom is disassociating from oppressors and instead obeying and worshiping God.

God is omniscient and knows all that is revealed or kept secret, and He is kind and merciful. All creatures are humble before Him and resign themselves to His will. God is alive and is the Creator of the universe and all life. God loves His creatures and desires nothing but goodness, blessings and perfection for them, and is against bullying, injustice, selfishness and domination.

With regard to justice, it is the foundation of the creation of humankind and the whole universe. Justice is tantamount to placing every phenomenon in its own place and providing humans with opportunities to

actualize all their divine capabilities. Without it, the order of the universe will collapse and the opportunity for perfection will fade away. Without justice, it would be impossible for human society to taste real peace, beauty, joy and happiness. Justice is the main pillar of social life, and without it social life cannot continue or grow.

Humans need to know God in order to realize a prosperous society in this world as well as to strive for a beautiful eternal life. To that end, they first have to know themselves and strive for loftiness in themselves and their societies. However, as long as the world is construed as closed, limited and aimless; as long as eternal life is considered imaginary and illusory, while the afterlife and the judgment day, as well as reward and punishment, are thought of as fictional and unreal; as long as morals and commitment to them are called backwardness, while immorality, lies, deceit and selfishness are considered desirable and humans are limited to a materialistic life in this world; as long as attempts are made to replace obedience to God and following His prophets and true freedom with servitude to materialistic tendencies, animal instincts and the oppression of others, while contention reaches its pinnacle; as long as the aggressors, because of their financial, political and propaganda powers, not only escape punishment but even claim righteousness; and as long as wars are started and nations enslaved in order to win votes in elections, not only will the problems of the global community remain unsolved, but they will be increasingly exacerbated.

Let us look at the situation in the world today.

Iraq was attacked under the false pretext of uncovering weapons of mass destruction and overthrowing a dictator. The dictator was toppled and weapons of mass destruction were not uncovered. A democratic government is established by the votes of the people, but after six years the occupiers are still there. They insist on imposing colonial agreements on the people of Iraq by keeping them under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Millions of people have been killed or displaced, and the occupiers, with no sense of shame, are still seeking to solidify their position in the political geography of the region and to dominate oil resources. They have no respect for the people of Iraq and they disregard any dignity, rights or status for them. The United Nations is not capable enough to solve the problems and to stop aggression, occupation and imposition.

In Palestine, 60 years of carnage and invasion is still continuing at the hands of some criminal and occupying Zionists. They have forged a regime by collecting people from various parts of the world and bringing them to another people's land by displacing, detaining and killing the true owners of that land. With advance notice, they invade, assassinate and maintain food and medicine blockades, while some hegemonic and bullying Powers support them. The Security Council cannot do anything and sometimes, under pressure from a few bullying Powers, even paves the way for supporting those Zionist murderers. It is natural that some United Nations resolutions that have addressed the plight of the Palestinian people have been relegated to the archives unnoticed.

In Afghanistan, the production of narcotics has multiplied since the presence of NATO forces began. Domestic conflicts continue, terrorism is spreading and innocent people are bombarded on a daily basis in streets, markets, and schools and at wedding ceremonies. The people of Afghanistan are the victims of the willingness of NATO member States to dominate the regions surrounding India, China and South Asia. The Security Council cannot do anything about it because some of those NATO members also happen to be the major decision-makers in the Council.

In Africa, there are efforts to re-establish the relationships of the colonial era. By starting civil wars in large countries, including the Sudan, the disintegration of those countries is planned in order to serve the interests of some corrupt Powers. When there is national resistance, the leaders of the resistance are put under pressure by legal mechanisms created by the very same Powers.

In Latin America, people find their security, national interests and cultures seriously endangered by the menacing shadow of alien domineering Governments, and even by the embassies of some empires.

The lives, property and rights of the people of Georgia, Ossetia and Abkhazia are victims of the tendencies and provocation of NATO and certain Western Powers and the underhanded actions of the Zionists.

The never-ending arms race, the proliferation and stockpiling of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and the threats to use them and the

establishment of missile defence systems have made the situation unstable.

With regard to Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, despite the inalienable right of all nations, including the Iranian nation, to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes, and despite such facts as the transparency of all Iranian activities and our country's full cooperation with the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Agency's repeated confirmation of the fact that Iran's activities are peaceful, a few bullying Powers have sought to put hurdles in the way of the peaceful nuclear activities of the Iranian nation by exerting political and economic pressure on Iran and threatening and pressuring IAEA. Those are the same Powers that produce new generations of lethal nuclear arms and possess stockpiles of nuclear weapons that no international organization is monitoring. Moreover, the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were perpetrated by one of them.

Indeed, they are not against weapons, but they oppose the progress of other nations, and tend to monopolize technologies and to use those monopolies to impose their will on other nations. However, it is very natural that the great Iranian people, with their trust in God, with determination and steadfastness and with the support of their friends, will resist the bullying and have defended and will continue to defend their rights. The Iranian nation is for dialogue, but it has not accepted and will not accept illegal demands. The time has come for IAEA to present a clear report to the international community on its monitoring of the disarmament of those nuclear Powers and their nuclear activities, and for a disarmament committee to be established by independent States to monitor the disarmament of those nuclear Powers.

Theories of development that are in line with the hegemonic system and not in accordance with the true needs of humankind and human societies have become repetitive and bland tools for assimilating economies, expanding hegemonic domination and destroying the environment and the social solidarity of nations. There is no end in sight to this. Poverty, hunger and deprivation are hurting more than one billion of the world's population and have dashed their hopes for a decent life.

The dignity, integrity and rights of the American and European people are being played with by a small but deceitful number of people called Zionists. Although they are a minuscule minority, they have been dominating an important portion of the financial and monetary centres, as well as the political decision-making centres of some European countries and the United States, in a deceitful, complex and furtive manner. It is deeply disastrous to witness that some presidential or premier nominees in some big countries have to visit those people, take part in their gatherings and swear their allegiances and commitment to their interests in order to attain financial or media support.

That means that the great people of America and various nations of Europe need to obey the demands and wishes of a small number of acquisitive and invasive people. Those nations are spending their dignity and resources on the crimes, occupation and threats of the Zionist network against their will.

All that is due to the manner in which the immoral and the powerful view the world, humankind, freedom, obeisance to God and justice. The thoughts and deeds of those who think they are superior to others and consider others to be second class and inferior, who intend to remain out of the divine circle and to be the absolute slaves of their materialistic and selfish desires, who intend to expand their aggressive and domineering natures, constitute the roots of the problems in societies today. They are the hindrances to the realization of material and spiritual prosperity and to security, peace and brotherhood among nations.

I explicitly state that the Iranian people and the overwhelming majority of peoples and Governments are against those deeds and perspectives of the world-domineering Powers. The establishment of justice requires people who have achieved moderation and justice inside themselves, restrained their domineering attitudes and actualized their attributes of self-sacrifice and are at the service of humankind. The complete and full-scale manifestation of such characteristics can happen only under the rule of the righteous and perfect human being who is obedient to God and who is promised by the divine prophets.

Of course, with the grace of God Almighty, a hopeful trend is flourishing in the heart and soul of human societies. The universal eagerness for justice, purity, love for others, monotheism and the quest for perfection is clearly and increasingly on the rise. A universal resistance to the acquisitiveness, aggression and selfishness of the bullying Powers is being formed.

Today, the bullying Powers' thoughts, practices and strategies are rejected by nations and Governments, and all are seeking to establish new human relations based on justice, with a view to attaining prosperity, perfection, security and sustainable welfare. That is the very auspicious phenomenon that all the traditions of creation and the ruling laws of the universe emphasize and support.

Today, the Zionist regime is on a definite slope to collapse, and there is no way for it to get out of the cesspool it and its supporters have created. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while fully respecting the resistance of the oppressed people of Palestine and expressing its all-out support for it, submits to the Secretary-General of the United Nations its humane solution, based on a free referendum in Palestine to determine and establish the type of State in the entire Palestinian lands.

The American empire in the world is reaching the end of its road, and its next rulers must limit their interference to their own borders. Today, the thought of hegemony quickly becomes a demerit.

I should now like to say a few words to expansionist Governments ruling global relations. Be aware that living with obedience to God and carrying out His orders, having compassion for people and striving for the fulfilment of justice is to your advantage too. I invite you to return to the path of God, the prophets and the people of the world, as well as to truth and justice. The only route to salvation is a divine straight path. Otherwise, God's hand of power will emerge from the sleeve of oppressed nations and will make your life difficult, and will put an end to your hegemony. Let us love the peoples of the world and respect their rights. Rectify past behaviour. That will benefit you and the human community. The Iranian people are prepared, along with other nations, to help you be rescued from your current situation and to establish peace and prosperity.

Fortuitously, opportunities are accessible. With the grace of God Almighty, the existing pillars of the oppressive system are crumbling. Great developments in favour of humankind, as well as its true and real rights, are on the way. A golden and brilliant future is awaiting humankind. A global community filled with justice, friendship, brotherhood and welfare is at hand, as I have elaborated — a community that will tread the path of beauty and love under the rule of the righteous and perfect human being, the one promised by all divine prophets and the one who is the true lover of humankind; a community that will be devoid of all fear, despair and privation. Such a community will soon be ours. The community promised by the great divine prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad is about to materialize.

Let us, hand in hand, expand the thought of resistance to evil and the minority of those who are ill-wishers. Let us support goodness and the majority of people who are good and the embodiment of absolute good that is the Imam of Time, the Promised One who will come accompanied by Jesus Christ, and accordingly design and implement just and humanistic mechanisms for regulating the constructive relationships between nations and Governments.

May the great Almighty deliver the saviour of nations and put an end to the sufferings of humankind and bring forth justice, beauty and love. Let us have a proper share in the establishment of that illuminated and promised divine age.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sleiman (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

I should also like in particular to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the excellent report he has prepared on the activities of the Organization in the past year (A/63/1), as well as for his concern in ensuring that the issues of Lebanon are at the centre of debate. In its close pursuit of the situation in Lebanon, the United Nations has established the foundations and principles necessary to face the crises and challenges that have undermined the stability and prosperity of our country. I would like to note in particular the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and pay tribute to the sacrifices of its personnel. I note also that in his report the Secretary-General notes that there is strong cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese army. I would like to confirm that Lebanon cares a great deal about the security and safety of those troops, especially vis-à-vis the terrorist attacks of which they have been the target.

Lebanon is the cradle of an ancient civilization. Its peace-loving people set sail from their shores towards the European continent, carrying with them elements of an advanced alphabet and spreading in the Mediterranean realm and whatever horizons they were able to open the spirit of communication, dialogue, and free exchange.

Lebanon, which believes in human and cultural values, is one of the oldest parliamentary democracies in the Middle East. Its constitution of 1926 embraces freedom of opinion, freedom of belief and justice and rejects confessionalism and fanaticism. In its endeavour to put this democracy into practice, our nation experienced a distinctive alternation of power despite all the crises, aggression and wars it has known. Today, our country is preparing for new parliamentary elections.

The young Lebanese nation that emerged in 1943, however, suffered from the aftermath of the catastrophe that befell Palestine in 1948. It has received on its narrow territory hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Since the late sixties, it has been subject to two large-scale Israeli invasions and to a series of Israeli devastating attacks that wreaked havoc in terms of lives, property and infrastructure. The records kept by this Organization bear witness to that brutality.

I recall the two massacres of Qana that were perpetrated against innocent children, women and the elderly, as well as the aggression of July 2006 in which tens of thousands were killed and wounded and displaced which led to the destruction of bridges and civilian facilities in various parts of the country. The Israeli bombardment of the Jiyeh power plant and its fuel storage tanks caused an environmental catastrophe resulting from an oil slick along the Lebanese coastline. That prompted the General Assembly of the United Nations to request Israel to provide immediate and adequate compensation to Lebanon for the damage and pollution it caused. Israel must pay due compensation for the full damage it caused through its repeated aggression against Lebanon.

The United Nations has not hesitated to shoulder its responsibilities towards Lebanon. The Organization issued a series of resolutions in support of Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, notably Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), which called for an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territory, and 1701 (2006), which "calls upon the Government of Israel ... to withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon". Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the full content of that resolution.

Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, the intransigence of Israel and its failure to comply with the will of the United Nations Security Council pushed Lebanon to adopt, in conjunction with diplomacy, other legitimate options. In 2000, thanks to its people, army and resistance, Lebanon was able to force Israel to withdraw from most of the Lebanese territory that it occupied. This year, successful efforts were made, with the help of the United Nations, to complete the liberation of the Lebanese prisoners and detainees from Israeli prisons.

Despite these achievements and its continued commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy, Lebanon still faces a host of urgent risks and challenges that require the following.

First, the international community should compel Israel to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and stop its serious threats to launch a new war against Lebanon. Such threats are acts of aggression that adversely affect the Lebanese State, the national economy and civil society.

The second challenge is the recovery or liberation of the remaining occupied Lebanese territory in Shabaa Farms, the hills of Kfarshuba and the northern part of

the village of Al-Ghajar, and the upholding of our rights to our water.

Thirdly, Israel must be forced to stop its extensive air breaches of Lebanon's sovereignty. In its most recent briefing to the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations confirmed the provocative nature of those actions.

Fourthly, we must obtain all the maps of landmines and cluster-bomb sites left behind by Israel on Lebanese soil. Their presence constitutes a direct threat to the civilian population, especially children. It deprives farmers and families of their livelihood and prevents them from cultivating their land. The States concerned are therefore called upon to meet their pledges to provide the necessary resources for demining declustering programmes.

Fifthly, we need to confront terrorism in all its forms and to maintain internal civic peace. The Lebanese army and the internal security forces have been subjected to brutal attacks by terrorist groups in recent years. They were forced to confront such terrorist groups and make costly and huge sacrifices to defend the dignity of the Lebanese people and their security and stability. In their efforts to combat Israeli terrorist operations, the Lebanese security services managed to arrest the head of an Israeli network that carried out espionage and assassination operations on Lebanese soil.

The sixth challenge is to develop a comprehensive national strategy to protect and defend Lebanon, which would be adopted and coordinated through genuine national dialogue, which we held on 16 September. That is in accord with the Doha Agreement, which is based on the sincere will for national reconciliation and on extending the authority of the Lebanese State over all of its territory.

On this occasion, Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the international tribunal established under Security Council resolution 1757 (2007) to investigate the crime of the assassination of martyr Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions. Lebanon is cooperating with the relevant organs of the United Nations to bring the truth to light and to achieve the process of justice away from any politicization.

Lebanon closely follows the developments of the situation in the Middle East. In view of its commitment to just Arab causes, especially the cause of Palestine, Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the process of achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region and to the Arab peace initiative that was unanimously adopted by Arab leaders at the 2002 Beirut Summit. Having said that, Lebanon stresses the need for Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories that are still under occupation and stresses the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to return to their land and to establish their independent State on their national soil.

We call on the international community to assume its full responsibilities to provide the necessary financial resources to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to support the work carried out by the Lebanese State in this area, until a just solution to the Palestinian problem is found.

From this rostrum, Lebanon cannot but draw the attention of the international community once again to its absolute rejection of any form of resettlement of the Palestinian refugees on its territory, for the following main reasons.

First, the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon runs counter to their right to return to their homeland and homes, which is reaffirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, it is difficult for a small country like Lebanon, with limited resources and a population below 4 million people, to provide a decent livelihood for more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees on its territory at a time when large segments of the Lebanese people are emigrating in search of their own livelihoods.

Thirdly, the resettlement of Palestinian refugees is explicitly rejected in the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, and by the Taif Agreement, which has been recognized and enshrined by resolutions of the United Nations and constitutes a key element of consensus in Lebanon.

While the issue of Lebanon is at the centre of attention of the United Nations, the agenda of our General Assembly is full of items and of political, economic, social and environmental topics that are still waiting for a comprehensive solution. In that context, Lebanon interacts in a special way with the needs and aspirations of the African continent, where hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens have been living on its

generous soil for over a century, contributing to Africa's prosperity and development under difficult circumstances. Accordingly, we support the political declaration issued yesterday at the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs. We therefore believe that a major international effort should be undertaken to finance programmes to combat poverty, disease and illiteracy as a means to preserve human dignity and to prevent further armed conflicts on that continent.

Similarly, we hope that a more effective project to build solidarity in the face of natural disasters will be quickly and efficiently finalized in view of the increasing risks arising from climate change, global warming, environmental degradation and the spread of wildfires in forests and green spaces.

Deeply rooted in history and, with the rise of nationalist movements, a contributor to the shaping of the Arab renaissance at the political, cultural, intellectual and social levels, as well as a founding member of the League of Arab States, Lebanon is devoted to preserving Arab solidarity. In that context, we need to revisit the concept of cooperation and good-neighbourliness between countries to consolidate peace and solidarity in the world. That approach will contribute to preserving human rights, and humanity will thus be able to prevent other world wars, regional conflicts and the transnational phenomenon of terrorism, as well as upheavals in our globalized economies, global crises and food crises. All of those matters represent major threats that could spark new wars that might spill over onto the regional level and from one continent to the next.

We need to push for United Nations reform in order to meet that new international challenge. Lebanon is extremely pleased to announce that we have been nominated once again to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the biennium 2010-2011. We are of course committed to making a positive and constructive contribution to the Council and hope that we will have the support of all friendly and brotherly States.

Lebanon's philosophy has been based on dialogue and coexistence from the day its citizens approved the National Covenant in 1943, and subsequently when they approved the 1989 National Reconciliation Agreement in Taif. Those themes were also repeatedly stressed in the 2008 Doha agreement. In the face of worsening international conflicts that herald a potential clash of civilizations, Lebanon might well represent a needed international example as a living laboratory of dialogue of cultures and religions.

In his Apostolic Letter of 1989, His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II described Lebanon as "more than a country; it is a message of freedom and a model of pluralism for both the East and the West". Moreover, in his homily delivered during his apostolic journey to Lebanon in 1997, John Paul II characterized Lebanon as "a country of many religious faiths, [which] has shown that these different faiths can live together in peace, brotherhood and cooperation". With 18 different sects coexisting on its soil, and having successfully preserved its democratic system and fundamental freedoms in spite of all sorts of challenges, Lebanon aspires today to become an international centre for the management of dialogue of civilizations and cultures, hoping that the forces of good in the world will prevail and that we can be constructive in our efforts to reach a just and comprehensive solution to all aspects of the conflict in the Middle East as soon as possible.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lebanon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Republic of Lebanon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kibaki: I wish first to congratulate Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time of great global challenges, such as the

energy crisis, high food prices and instability in the financial markets. Those are serious problems that could erode the gains the world economy has made in the past 10 years. Let me add that our gathering here also provides a window of opportunity for us to review the progress we have made, individually and collectively, in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Nevertheless, before proceeding with my remarks, I wish first of all to update the Assembly on the progress Kenya has made following the challenges we faced soon after the general elections held in December 2007.

Kenyans, fellow Africans and the international community held on to the hope that our country would obtain a peacefully negotiated outcome to the political crisis. That hope was realized on 28 February with the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act. The Accord paved the way for the establishment of a grand coalition Government representing all major political parties and interests in our country.

The Government is making use of that historic window of opportunity to build a consensus that will enable us to address the major challenges facing our nation. We are, for instance, making good progress towards the implementation of far-reaching legal, constitutional and policy reforms that will entrench national cohesion and meet the political, economic and social aspirations of our people.

I am confident that, over the past few months, Kenya has regained its glory and redeemed its image as a peaceful nation, a safe tourist and investment destination and the regional hub for peace and humanitarian efforts. I wish to express, on behalf of all Kenyans, our profound gratitude for the engagement and support of all our friends. In that connection, I wish to pay special tribute to the members of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, led by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the African Union and the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his personal and constant support.

As Africa grapples with the challenges of competitive elections in fragile democracies divided by regional, racial, religious and ethnic differences, the time has come for us to reflect on the role of competitive electoral processes in the building of our national democratic institutions.

Indeed, the challenge of attaining democratic and inclusive elected Governments is at the core of the conflicts and insecurity prevailing in many parts of Africa. In the Sudan, for example, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) continues to hold three years after its signing, despite challenges. I welcome the efforts made by the parties to the CPA in overcoming some recent difficulties. I urge them to intensify their efforts to address all outstanding issues in the implementation of the Accord.

On the other hand, the situation in Somalia remains fragile. That is mainly because the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has still not received full support from the international community.

While I pay tribute to the Governments of Uganda and Burundi for providing troops as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia, I urge the deployment of the remaining troops to strengthen the Mission. I also urge the United Nations and the international community to assume greater responsibility in Somalia so as to nurture the emergence of a stable and democratic country.

With regard to the Great Lakes, tremendous progress has been made in promoting peace while reducing conflict in the region. The conclusion of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region has given impetus to our efforts. However, the implementation of the Pact faces challenges owing to renewed tension and hostilities. I call upon all those involved to embrace the Pact and to seek the peaceful resolution of current problems. We must not derail our goal of achieving economic development and regional integration in the Great Lakes. The Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, on which we all agreed, is now operational. I appeal to the international community to contribute to the Fund. It is a crucial pillar for the promotion of peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

I now return to the food crisis, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. Our meeting is taking place at a time when Africa and many other parts of the world are facing a severe food shortage. I am therefore happy to note that the theme of this general debate, "The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations", pays particular attention to that important subject. Indeed, while food prices have risen

globally, their impact has been most severe and adverse for the poorest people living in developing countries. The continued rise in food prices has national security implications for most developing nations.

Therefore, in the immediate future, we must, as Members of the United Nations, find mechanisms to deliver sufficient quantities of affordable food to poor people in Africa and other parts of the developing world. In the medium term, we must also address the issues of agricultural productivity, particularly in terms of making available to smaller farmers in Africa better-yielding seed varieties, modern farming techniques and cheaper fertilizer. That will require more effective global partnerships among developed nations, international institutions and developing nations. In particular, such partnerships should place food security, agricultural technology development and transfer, trade and agricultural credit at the centre of the development agenda.

Indeed, the most equitable way to lift Africa's people out of poverty and underdevelopment is through the widespread commercialization of agriculture. We must focus on the manufacture of and trade in value-added agricultural products, supported by efficient financial services and markets. In that regard, the global community should hasten consensus on agriculture and other contentious issues, so as to enable the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization.

On the issue of escalating global oil prices, I wish to make a passionate appeal to oil-producing nations to consider the plight of non-oil-producing nations, especially those in the developing world. There is need to address the problem of speculative trading in the oil futures market, where prices have doubled in the past year. Indeed, the rapid increase in oil prices is hurting developing countries the most and does not augur well for international peace and stability. We should all be aware that we are one global community and that none of us is completely isolated from the instability caused by inflationary pressures resulting from the high oil prices.

We have, over the years, discussed the need for a more effective and accountable United Nations that will enable us to address the emerging and persistent global challenges such as climate change, international security, poverty, conflicts and economic disparities. Towards that end, reform at the Security Council is imperative. We need to ensure that its composition reflects equitable geographical representation of the entire United Nations membership. Africa therefore deserves permanent representation on the Security Council.

Reforms are also needed in other areas. We are convinced that strengthening the Economic and Social Council will enable that organ to reassert its authority and its capacity to promote greater coherence and coordination with the multinational financial institutions, the World Trade Organization and other United Nations bodies.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his continued focus on the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, the establishment of the MDGs Africa Steering Group, which has, among other interventions, proposed the launching of an African green revolution. I also look forward to the insights and recommendations that will come out of the High-level Event on MDGs later this week.

Finally, I wish to note that the challenges facing us today, such as the global food crisis, attaining the MDGs and climate change, more than ever before require coordinated global and multilateral cooperation. A more effective and accountable United Nations is therefore needed to meet and overcome these challenges.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to

the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): My first words are addressed to the President of the General Assembly, at its sixty-third session, my friend Miguel d'Escoto. I am pleased that the responsibility of presiding over our deliberations has fallen to a distinguished Latin American of such political and diplomatic eminence in his country and in the region.

The President has invited us — and because of its great importance we are obliged to comply with his suggestion — to focus our debate on the impact of the world food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world.

This Organization was founded at the end of a world conflagration in order to banish war forever and to prevent armed confrontations between nations or groups of nations. Although it has not been possible to avoid all such events, certainly it has acted as a deterrent force that has prevented wars that might have proved even more devastating. The nations of the world decided that it would be here that conflicts among its Members would be resolved.

Now we have to act on a conflict that is not between Member States, but is rather one of all States against hunger and poverty. It is difficult to explain why, if the world is producing sufficient food for all, 854 million people find themselves in a state of food insecurity and more than 1.7 billion people are suffering from iron deficiency. In the last few days we have noted how hundreds of millions of dollars have been directed to rescue commercial enterprises, while we still view with indifference the fact that every year 5.6 million children younger than 5 years are dying directly or indirectly because of malnutrition — that is 640 each hour. In other words, since the moment when we began our deliberations this morning, 5,000 children younger than 5 years have died. They did not die because of terrorist acts, which all condemn, nor because of natural disasters, which we all regret. They died for a reason as simple as it is tragic — they were poor. This situation is simply indefensible.

As part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we undertook to reduce the number of people suffering from hunger by one half and the number of people who live with an income of less than $1 per day by one half between 1990 and 2015. How can we meet this objective if the price of rice has risen by 74 per cent and that of wheat by 130 per cent? How can we meet this objective if more than one billion people who have escaped extreme poverty run the risk of suffering from hunger unless we do something to stop this upward spiral of food prices?

What is the point of ensuring that more people earn more than a dollar a day if the rise in food prices has in fact altered that measurement of extreme poverty? I do not want to suggest that nothing is being done. The World Food Programme is doing formidable work and donor countries have made extraordinary contributions to alleviate the crisis and bring food to the countries that need it most.

The deliberations of the Human Rights Council, the High-level Conference on World Food Security held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the meeting of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis constitute additional expressions of the concern of international bodies.

But the fact is that we face a reality that has already caused social disruption and to which no immediate solution is in sight. The major mission of the United Nations is the preservation of peace, and peace is not just the absence of armed conflict between countries, but also lies in the tranquillity of nations and entails the elimination of adverse factors that may disturb that tranquillity.

As if skyrocketing food prices were not enough, they have now been compounded by unjustified speculation, which has raised the price of fuel to absurd levels. It is no longer just the exorbitant earnings of oil companies that are at stake; what is at stake now is the hunger of millions of people who have seen their efforts and hopes go up in smoke without even knowing what has hit them.

This means that we must see to it that from the United Nations reforms that have been so often postponed there emerges a strengthened General Assembly so that, as an expression of all its membership, it may act with authority in response to such situations as those before us today. The Constitution of almost all States of the world provides for the declaration of a state of emergency as a mechanism for dealing with imminent threats to national security or to social harmony.

I am convinced, and I want to say so today, that because of the price of food, we are facing a threat to social peace and that the General Assembly could so declare it so that all governmental forces, private initiatives and international bodies may coordinate their efforts in a crusade to rescue hundreds of millions of people from the clutches of poverty.

The world food price crisis cannot be dissociated from climate change, as if these two problems were not interrelated. Climate change has led to irregular crops through droughts and floods that have had such a severe effect on food stocks.

If the problem of the scarcity and the lack of food is something that we have to deal with comprehensively, we should take measures to mitigate the polluting effects of carbon, at least by market mechanisms or a limiting of carbon production. It is indispensable to develop more efficient technologies, such as wind and solar energy, to take the place of fossil fuels, if our response is not to remain a temporary palliative but may offer a lasting, sustainable solution; we must see to it, without further delay, that we tackle both problems, the food crisis and climate change, in an integral, comprehensive and consistent manner.

It is only thus that we will be able, without further delay, to arrive at responses that are not just stopgaps, but lasting, sustainable solutions. Indeed, ever-greater importance is to be attached to the way we relate to the ecosystems that sustain life throughout the world, and how that affects the survival of our species and civilization.

We must understand that the environmental agenda of the twenty-first century cannot be built on the basis of the idea of a conflict between the environment and the market, nor between the environment and trade barriers, but on the basis of opportunities which the market and trade offer to stimulate new ways of addressing the environmental issues that affect us all.

We know today that there is no intractable contradiction between conservation and development, as perhaps there might have appeared to be when the United Nations convened the first meeting to discuss the subject in 1972. Let us make no mistake. The opposite of conservation is not development, but waste. It is clear from the intimate relationship that exists between environmental problems and those that have to do with social and economic development that the best way to promote natural capital is to promote social capital.

The only way to create a different environment is to build a society free of the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and ignorance which today limit our capacity to establish harmonious relations among all social sectors, and between them and their natural environment.

We have the resources to do it: technology, scientific knowledge and, above all, political leadership and innovative capacity. But we can only succeed through a common approach to environmental management, shared by all the members of the global community who are already moving in this same direction.

The international community has been happy to see that on the other side of the Pacific, tensions have abated, but we note with concern that threats to international peace and security have emerged in other parts of the world.

Panama has set forth its positions in the Security Council. I shall therefore only refer to what was also suggested by the President, that is, the need to democratize this Organization.

Over the last four years, I have heard from countless speakers a widespread demand for the United Nations to finally adapt its structures, which the 50 signatories of the original Charter designed 60 years ago, to the reality of an Organization with 192 Member States and a geopolitical situation very different from that which then existed.

It has become a ritual repeated year after year for every Head of State, foreign minister or ambassador to call, without much success, for a recrafting of the Organization. For myself, as is shown by the commitment of my country to the United Nations, for the fifth time in five years, I come to this podium to ask with the same vigour and energy for the political will to implement reforms.

Panama made a proposal, which, like all the others, could not be the subject of consensus. We still stand by it. We stand by the idea that this Organization must modernize itself, and soon. We cannot allow a situation where, in the absence of agreement, we end up by abandoning the spirit of reform that has inspired us up till now.

I propose therefore that we agree, before the end of the decade, upon initial fundamental reforms which will begin to turn the wheels of modernization. There are numerous examples in different parts of the world, as well as in my own experience as a member of the Government, that allow me to assure members that small reforms, which may appear insignificant to begin with, eventually lead to other, more profound reforms. We must start somewhere.

I would like to express my gratitude to the General Assembly for granting my country, Panama, the honour of non-permanent membership of the Security Council over the past two years. Panamanian diplomats and jurists contributed to the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations and, since that time, Panama's representatives have contributed the wealth of their experience so that the principles which inspired the Charter can continue to prevail. You may rest assured that we will not rest until this Organization, so vital for peace in the world and the sole hope for millions of the poor, is finally endowed with a legal structure appropriate for the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Uganda is convinced that, with your experience and well-known diplomatic skills, we shall have a successful session. I wish today to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim, for the excellent manner in which he presided over the sixty-second session. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his leadership and efforts to reform our Organization.

The founding fathers of the United Nations had a dream of creating an organization whose purpose, among others, was "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character". Today the world is facing a multitude of problems, many of which the United Nations was meant to address.

It is encouraging that the theme chosen for this session is the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations. The view of some of us in Uganda is that the so-called food crisis is actually good for equatorial Africa. It is certainly good for Uganda's farmers. Over the years, we have been growing a lot of food: maize, bananas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, rice and wheat; and producing animal products such as milk and beef. The problem has always been the market for this food.

That was an account of two problems: first, protectionism in the United States, the European Union, Japan, China, et cetera; and secondly, the lack of factories to process that food so that it could reach distant markets. Apart from these two, there are other factors in some African countries, including poor traffic infrastructure, lack of electricity, lack of seeds, et cetera. These, however, do not apply to Uganda. In the case of Uganda, the problem has been the lack of markets and low processing capacity, in other words, low value addition. The rest we have, or we can have easily.

The high food and commodity prices have arisen on account of the hundreds of millions of Chinese and Indians that have entered the opulent middle class in the last 20 years. That means they need better food, better houses that require cement and steel bars, and better means of locomotion such as cars. That is why food and commodity prices have gone up. It is for the same reason that petroleum prices have gone up: if only 200 people were driving cars previously, the number has now risen to 400. That means more demand for petroleum. Following the continuously

rising petroleum prices, some Western countries have started talking of biofuels — using plants to produce diesel.

Uganda, however, welcomes all of this. It is an opportunity, as far as we are concerned. It is not a bottleneck. In fact, farmers in Uganda are already reaping high. That is why our economy grew by 9 per cent last year. Once we solve the problem of energy, our economy will grow in double digits.

It is good that the United States of America, the European Union, India, Japan and China have opened their markets to African products, tariff-free, quota-free. However, there is still the issue of subsidies. They should be removed. In Uganda, we farm without subsidies. Why should not the farmers in those countries with better infrastructure, lower interest rates, abundant electricity, et cetera, do the same? Why do they need protection? Protectionism interferes with those countries that can produce food easily, such as Uganda. That is not correct.

We have been producing too much milk without having the capacity to process it. Recently, an Indian-owned company installed a high-tech integrated milk-processing plant and began to process powdered milk, producing a whole range of finished milk products: pasteurized milk, ultra-heat-treated (long-life) milk, yoghurt, butter, ghee, et cetera. Those milk products are now being exported to all parts of the world.

Another example has been bananas. Uganda produces 10 million metric tons of bananas per annum. These are high-quality bananas — called *enyam wonyo* in one of our local dialects — which contain rare ingredients. They are quite different from the bananas known in other parts of the world. Forty per cent of those bananas have been rotting in gardens and marketplaces. Our scientists, funded by our Government, are now converting them into processed foods such as flour, bread, snacks, et cetera.

High fuel prices are a real problem for countries that do not have petroleum. Maximizing the use of other forms of energy — including hydropower; geothermal power, which is used effectively in countries such as Iceland; solar power; wind power; and biofuels — is part of the answer for such countries. All that, however, depends on the development of human resources through education. An educated population has more capacity to look for answers than an uneducated population.

As far as Uganda is concerned, in addition to lazy individuals, the only groups that are adversely affected by high food prices are salary earners in towns. Unlike farmers, they cannot benefit from higher food prices; yet they must buy food. Fortunately, however, all such families in Uganda have a dual capacity: in addition to being salary earners, they or their relatives own land in rural areas. They can therefore subsidize themselves by growing food using that land. Africa and other regions with agriculture-based economies should rise up, utilize their full potential and take advantage of high food prices.

Regarding the statement that I have heard repeated so many times since the opening of the present session of the General Assembly — that no African country can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 — I would like to make two positions clear. First, the statement confirms what I said yesterday at the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs. Discussing sustainable development without discussing socio-economic transformation is not correct. We have repeatedly pointed that out. I have often used the example of pregnancy: one cannot talk endlessly about "sustainable pregnancy". Yes, pregnancy should be sustainable until it transitions into a baby. Therefore, as Europe did, and as other societies in Asia have recently done, Africa must metamorphose socially, economically and technologically from a pre-industrial, sometimes feudal, society into a middle-class and skilled-working-class society, period. Achievement of all the MDGs would be the consequence of such a metamorphosis.

One cannot maintain a pre-industrial society and somehow achieve the MDGs. An industrial society is what Uganda has been working towards over the past 20 years. Africa must industrialize, develop a modern services sector and commercialize agriculture. That means that emphasis must be placed on market access. It means that we should not only gain access to the major markets of the world, but also rationalize our own African markets through regional and continental integration. It also means that, in order to lower the costs of doing business in Africa, we should deal with energy; transport, especially by rail; and primary and higher-level education. Achievement of the MDGs would be a consequence of these developments, rather than a precursor or a phenomenon extraneous to them.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The second position that I would like to point out regarding the MDGs is that Uganda is on course to meet all of them except those related to maternal health and child mortality. I see no reason why those Goals should not be achieved. With the exception of combating HIV/AIDS — which is behaviour-related — I am sure that all the others are achievable if we in Uganda do enough political-led sensitization and investment.

I do not associate myself with those who are pessimistic about Africa or with those who put the cart before the horse. Why, for instance, were industrialization and value addition not made one of the MDGs? The export of raw materials is one of the cardinal sins that cause Africa to contribute only a 2 per cent share of world trade. If value were added to those raw materials, Africa's share of world trade would rise, even today. Africa is exporting many things, but they are in the form of raw materials; that is why their value is 2 per cent. If value were added to those raw materials, their value would rise.

Moreover, that would create jobs for Africans and therefore contribute structurally to poverty eradication. How are we supposed to eradicate poverty without creating jobs, other than by using witchcraft? We have repeatedly pointed out these issues in several forums, to no avail. It is Africans themselves who can and should resolve them.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jagdeo: I join with those who have spoken before me in congratulating General Assembly President d'Escoto-Brockmann on his election to guide the work of the Assembly at its sixty-third session.

As we meet this week, the global financial system is confronting its sternest test in recent memory. The current crisis is systemic in nature, historic in scale and global in reach. It comes at a time when the world economy is still wrestling with the most rapid escalation, and the highest real levels ever recorded, in the prices for fuel and food commodities. Together with the world's belated attention to the devastating economic and social implications of climate change, those developments define the agenda before global institutions and national leaders today. They make the theme for this year's debate both timely and necessary.

Given the gravity and urgency of the issues before us, we must be careful not to conduct this year's debate in the customary rhetorical manner. Instead, we must resolve to translate the detailed analysis, lofty statements and good intentions for which the Assembly has become well known into concrete actions that the current circumstances demand of us, and on which history will judge us.

We must each, as countries approaching the podium to speak, be prepared to account for the pledges we have previously made. We must also be bold enough to embark on a project to achieve real change in the multilateral system. That change must be based on mandates that are relevant, institutions that are accountable and a context that is increasingly reflective of integration and interconnectedness.

Indeed, I would urge that the theme of the next General Assembly should emphasize accountability and coherence of action on the part of the developed world in matters related to aid, trade and development. Often, when taken together, the policies of those countries result in a significant net loss of welfare in the developing world and run counter to their declared intentions — for example, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

An episode that manifested itself merely two years ago as a moderate decline in the housing market in some parts of the United States, and that evolved into difficulties for that country's sub-prime mortgage market, has now grown into a rapidly deepening systemic financial crisis of global proportions. Even if they are not fully integrated into the global financial system, small vulnerable economies such as Guyana will bear the full effect of those developments as demand for exports tightens, the cost of capital rises, foreign direct investment becomes scarce and tourist arrivals and migrant remittances decline. In short, economic growth and poverty reduction efforts will suffer a severe setback and the Millennium Development Goals will become even more elusive.

At the same time, crude oil prices rose by 148 per cent during the 18 months preceding July of this year. In turn, that has contributed to increasing prices for food commodities — in particular for such staples as cereals — rising in some cases by more than 200 per cent during the same period. While there have been some signs in recent weeks of those increases tapering off, and in some cases reversing marginally, the outlook clearly suggests that high prices for energy and food are here to stay.

Without a doubt, increased food prices provide an important opportunity and incentive to farmers and agricultural economies to increase production. However, they also present grave implications for access to food, in particular by the poor and, by extension, for key nutrition and health indicators among our populations.

The 2007 *World Development Report* shows that growth generated by agriculture can be up to four times more effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors. Yet the share of agriculture in official development assistance fell from 17 per cent in 1980 to just 2.9 per cent in 2006. Agriculture must therefore be given high priority in the international agenda as well as in national budgets.

It is also urgently necessary for large developed countries to re-examine ways in which current inefficient and distortionary trade policies, in particular subsidies that support inefficient domestic production and tariffs that protect against more competitive imports, can be restructured to reduce distortions in the global marketplace.

Given the impact that persistently high food prices into the future will have on the poor, the global community must commit itself to designing and funding appropriate safety nets to ensure improved access to food and the maintenance of basic nutrition.

In recent times, the Assembly has been deeply concerned about the consequences of climate change, and rightly so. But future generations demand that that concern be translated into rapid action. The climate change challenge will not slow down to meet the pace set by the United Nations. Our response must speed up to meet the pace of climate change.

The facts are straightforward. If we are to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown, we need to stabilize annual greenhouse gas emissions at about the equivalent of 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide per capita by 2050. Therefore, let the debate move on to how we make that happen, and not stagnate on a paralysing fear born from the magnitude of the problem.

There are some promising signs. The Kyoto Protocol has resulted in the emergence of a $60 billion carbon market, which is a welcome start. But although common sense dictates that those financial flows should be proportional to the problem being addressed, the bulk of that money stays within the developed world.

As a rainforest country, Guyana is particularly aware that there is virtually no capital flowing to address tropical deforestation — despite the fact that it causes 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and, as analyses done by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Nicholas Stern and others have highlighted, doing so is the most cost-effective abatement solution. That is because the Kyoto Protocol contains no significant incentives to slow the rate of tropical deforestation.

As leaders, we must set a clear direction for our negotiators as we send them to agree a post-Kyoto climate agreement, one that asserts a sense of proportionality in addressing the causes of climate change and ensures that all major mitigation options are pursued. We must also break the false debate that suggests that countries must choose between combating climate change and supporting national development. Instead, we need to forge new high-growth, low-carbon economies and make national development supportive of progress towards global emissions targets.

Specifically, those of us who are leaders of rainforest countries need to understand that we provide services that are vital to the health of our planet and that, when we seek capital flows to compensate for that, we are not merely acting as passive poor countries looking for aid: we are providing a critical component of the climate solution and we should be leading the design of mechanisms as we forge a post-Kyoto climate agreement.

In Guyana, despite the fact that 85 per cent of our people live below sea level and are already suffering from changing weather patterns and rising water levels, we do not want to just complain about climate change. Instead, we want to partner with others to create a solution. As part of that, we are ready to discuss placing almost our entire rainforest in the service of the world if the right economic incentives are created and if that can be done in a way that neither trades sovereignty over our forest nor restricts the legitimate development aspirations of our people.

The African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are currently negotiating an economic partnership agreement with the European Union (EU). That agreement may fundamentally affect development in our societies and jeopardize our future negotiating positions at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The European Commission has threatened to impose tariffs on our exports under the Generalized System of Preferences if we do not sign agreements that reflect the EU's model of WTO compatibility, even though the model includes issues that have been removed from the WTO agenda — the so-called Singapore issues. Those agreements will also seriously prejudice our negotiations with other countries and may jeopardize the future of our integration movement.

The exploitation of the EU's superior negotiating strength and the use of threats to get countries to sign are, ironically, how the EU hopes to start this partnership under the economic partnership agreement. What is particularly irksome is that we are incessantly lectured by the same group of countries to the effect that national consultations and working with civil society are essential hallmarks of good governance. Yet when the same civil society opposes the economic partnership agreement on the grounds that it is not sufficiently developmental in nature, we are told to ignore them — they are complainers. I wonder if the leaders of those countries know, or care, what is being done in their names. Even at this late hour, I wish to plead with the EU leaders to review those agreements before they irretrievably harm the good historic relations that have existed between the ACP and the EU.

That brings me to the matter of the much-needed reform of our multilateral institutions, which has been on the agenda for some time. However, it would be fair to say that it has progressed slowly and its results have been few and difficult to observe. I believe that the reforms must be pursued along certain predefined principles. First, the institutions must have new mandates that are relevant to the current circumstances, and they must have at their disposal tools to discharge those mandates effectively. Secondly, the institutions must have legitimacy and reflect an equitable representation of their membership. Thirdly, in the discharge of their functions, they must demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness. Fourthly, they must display the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that limitations in the mandate and functioning of the international financial institutions were a contributory factor in the current financial crisis. The mandate of the International Monetary Fund should explicitly be the preservation of systemic financial stability as a global public good. In addition, the use of passive surveillance as a general instrument and conditionality-based lending among the more vulnerable members have clearly proved to be ineffective. That is so not least because the incentives associated with conditionality-based lending are almost invariably never applicable to countries of systemic importance, and no mechanisms exist to encourage larger countries to respond to policy advice.

Likewise, the World Bank should have a revised mandate that focuses on certain key development challenges, such as protection of the environment, clean energy and certain aspects of poverty reduction, instead of trying to address every development challenge and undermining its own effectiveness. In addition, more needs to be done to democratize the institutions, to align the interests of the management and staff with those of the countries they serve and to make them more accountable to the membership.

Similarly, a more democratic and reformed United Nations Organization will be better placed to play a central role in the multilateral system in serving

the interests of the international community as a whole, whether in relation to its peace and security mandates, the protection of fundamental rights or the promotion of development.

Within the Commonwealth, heads of Government have developed a set of principles and guidelines that should underpin reform of the international institutions. Among their recommendations is a call for a conference along the lines of Bretton Woods to lead the way in determining the future of the international financial institutions. I trust that those principles and guidelines will be fully embraced.

I wish this sixty-third session of the Assembly every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: I welcome the opportunity today to address this sixty-third annual gathering of the Assembly at such a critical moment in the history of my own country and of the United Nations.

Sometimes, the most extreme tests of this institution's towering ideals arise in small, faraway places, of which we know very little. I come to you as the representative of one of those places — the country of Georgia, a land of fewer than 5 million that last month was invaded by our neighbour. Despite our small size, the legal, moral, political and security implications raised by that invasion could not have greater consequences.

Indeed, those issues cut through to the heart of the founding Charter of the United Nations. The principles enshrined in that Charter include the inviolability of sovereign borders, the sanctity of human rights, the supremacy of international law and the global rejection of armed aggression.

All of those principles were put to the test by the invasion and now hang in the balance. The invasion violated Georgia's internationally recognized borders. At the very beginning of the aggression, we clearly told our own people and the world that the spirit of the people of Georgia would not be broken and that we would never give up freedom and never surrender. We never did and never will. The subsequent recognition of the so-called independence of our two regions — South Ossetia, with a population of less than 20,000 in the areas that Russia controlled, and Abkhazia, with a population of less than 50,000 ethnic Abkhaz — in order to punish our country and send a signal to the rest of the world, not only challenged our territorial integrity but also defied common sense and the elementary principles of international interaction. The ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of our people violated the very idea of human rights.

This General Assembly, therefore, faces a general challenge. We are called upon not just to respond to the particular question of one instance of armed aggression in a single place but to define our attitude towards armed aggression in all places. We are called upon to answer the momentous question: will this body stand up for its founding principles, or will it allow them to be crushed under the treads of invading tanks, under the boots of ethnic cleansers, under the immobilizing impact of cyberattacks and under the pernicious tactics of violent separatism?

What would it mean for every member of this Assembly to defend the underlying principles of the United Nations?

First, each of us must refuse to stand silent in the face of this armed aggression and assault on human rights.

Secondly, we must stand united and immediately adopt a policy of non-recognition towards Georgia's two breakaway provinces, currently occupied and

annexed by the aggressor. Together, we have both a moral and a legal obligation to protect international law and the world order.

Thirdly, we must ensure that all parties comply with the full terms of the existing ceasefire agreement.

Fourthly, and lastly, we must resolve to create a meaningful United Nations conflict resolution process that will peacefully reunify Georgia and solve the problem.

The bottom line is this: we must be ready to use the full power of international law and of our collective international institutions to uphold the historic balance of justice and thereby set in motion a series of actions to right these historic wrongs.

While the crisis poses grave challenges for the entire international community, it creates specific obligations for my own country. I would argue that the answer to that new assault on our shared values is not a closing up or a circling of the wagons, but rather greater openness on many fronts. As a democracy, we have nothing to fear. As a democracy, we have an obligation to our people and to the international community to be even more open and transparent. For me and my Government, that commitment translates into a series of specific actions at both the international and the domestic levels. Allow me to explain.

First, I know that there are many people in the world who seek a clearer understanding of how this war started and who started it. Rather than recite our case, let me repeat the simple invitation that I first made on 17 August while standing next to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who visited Georgia immediately after the unleashing of hostilities, when I proposed that there should be an exhaustive independent investigation of the origins and causes of this war.

Investigators must have unimpeded access to all officials, documents and intelligence. Georgia welcomes such an investigation. My Government is ready to share every piece of evidence and to provide access to every witness sought by investigators. We call on the other party to this conflict to fully cooperate and not to obstruct the investigation. That is how democracies behave. The truth must come out, not only to clarify how events unfolded last month but also to help us to answer the fundamental questions that this invasion has raised.

My Government's second initiative of openness involves developments within our borders. Whereas others waged this war with arms, we will wage it with values. Georgia was attacked because it is a successful democracy in our part of the world. Our response today is to make our democracy even more robust. That is why I am announcing to the Assembly four categories of expanded democratic initiatives.

First, we will strengthen the checks and balances of our democratic institutions, including granting greater independence to parliament and to the judiciary. Secondly, we will provide additional resources and protections to foster greater political pluralism, including by increasing funding for opposition parties and ensuring they have greater access to the airwaves. Thirdly, we will strengthen the rule of law by introducing enhanced due process, trials by jury and lifetime judicial appointments. Fourthly, we will expand and deepen protections for private property. In everything we do, we will be transparent.

This morning, I was honoured to learn that, in Transparency International's latest index, Georgia was among the few countries to have risen significantly in the rankings over the past year. Indeed, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development ranks Georgia among the least corrupt economies in Europe.

Despite all the turmoil, my country has endured. That proves the resiliency and irreversibility of our democratic commitment. In short, we will fight the spectre of aggression and authoritarianism with the most potent weapon in our arsenal, namely, our commitment to ever-expanding freedoms within our own borders. That amounts to nothing less than a second Rose Revolution. If our first revolution was about meeting a threat from within by reinventing a failed State riddled by corruption, our second revolution must be even more focused, as we now face an even greater challenge — one that comes from the outside. The success of the first Rose Revolution helped save my country. The health of the international order could well depend on the outcome of the second Rose Revolution.

Countless people throughout the world were deeply moved and profoundly troubled by the invasion of Georgia, which began, with tragic irony, on the eve of that great celebration of peace, the Olympic Games. On the most basic level, the world responded with passionate humanity to the plight of ordinary

Georgians under siege; to the sight of 80-year-old men and women driven from their villages; to the hundreds of thousands of innocent souls taking shelter from bombings; to a small country of less than 5 million people being trampled by a neighbour 300 times its size. The world responded immediately by sending generous aid, by coming to Georgia and by showing its solidarity. Meanwhile, leaders from around the world have been working tirelessly to negotiate and enforce a ceasefire.

I am especially grateful to President Sarkozy of France for his dedication to ensuring that the ceasefire is fully implemented in letter and in spirit. As all parties have agreed, that means the full withdrawal of all military forces from my country to their pre-conflict positions.

The world's actions proved that the most potent response to this brutal invasion is to rebuild Georgia's democracy and economy, making them even stronger than before. I want to make a special commitment to all those who, during these especially difficult economic times, are helping to fund Georgia's reconstruction: we will spend their resources wisely, well and with full transparency.

Georgia will rebuild. It will contribute to the prosperity and security of all its citizens and of the entire international community by providing stability in our part of the world and serving as a model for democratic development. Reconstruction will also ensure that Europe continues to benefit from the true energy security that comes from diversification. And everything we do will be done peacefully.

But today we must ask a series of questions, the answers to which have grave consequences. We have all wondered in recent weeks: was this invasion an aberration or a misguided attempt to resort to the nineteenth-century logic of brute force, or was it a sign of an ominous new trend, one that could continue and deepen to undermine the international order of the twenty-first century, eroding State sovereignty and the power of our common and hard-fought principles? I believe that that question and others have not yet been answered. Others still need to be asked.

Will we encourage violent and hateful separatism around the world, standing aside when State sovereignty is subverted, or will we draw a clear line and defend the principles that uphold the international order and declare, enough? In the twenty-first century, we have better ways to protect the rights of ethnic minorities than with T-72 tanks and Sukhoi fighter jets.

We have developed a body of legal and political examples to accommodate minority demands within the context of national sovereignty. After all, that is one of the great achievements of the United Nations, of the European Union and of other multilateral and regional organizations. Its foundation is the belief that democracy and prosperity provide room for all. Are we ready to throw all that away?

And what of the use of brute force? Will we look the other way or reward the dispatch of tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of planes across internationally recognized borders to bomb another country? Will we cover our eyes when ethnic cleansing occurs, as it has over and over again for the past 16 years in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? In a world that struggles to reign in traditional forms of State violence, will we sanction new ones?

During the invasion of Georgia, we witnessed several terrifying new twists in the waging of war. We saw proxy forces and militias cynically unleashed to ethnically cleanse the population of my country, operating without any restraint and outside any order. We demand a thorough United Nations investigation of the crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights violations that have been committed.

We have experienced the first full-scale cyber warfare campaign, which was aimed at crippling my country's economy and our ability to communicate with the outside world. It is profoundly distressing to see the technology that has woven our world together and helped to bridge cultures being used to divide ethnic groups and to tear our world apart.

Today, when most of the world understands the existential threat posed by climate change and ecological destruction, we in Georgia have witnessed a sickening campaign of ecocide as part of the invasion. That occurred when combat helicopter gunships continuously dropped firebombs on old-growth forests in the Borjomi National Park, which comprises our national centre for tourism, recreation, culture and water resources. I believe that, together, we have the solemn responsibility to deliver answers to those questions. We will succeed. Let us resolve to bring the right conclusions to the world.

The invasion of our country provided an impressive demonstration of the power of global public opinion, which can find expression only when societies are open and free. Ultimately, what stopped the tanks and troops from taking our capital was the international disapproval voiced by so many here, by the free media, by courageous human rights groups and by leading voices of the world's conscience, from Natan Sharansky to Václav Havel.

Rhetoric, however, is no longer enough; today, we must act. If words were sufficient, then something might have come from the many calls for peace and the countless warnings that I myself have made from this rostrum over the years. No one has fought harder than my country and myself to heal the ethnic rifts in Georgia and to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and we will continue to fight forcefully.

Indeed, in this very place, I have warned so many times that this situation was in the making — that there was a threat. Four years ago, we were discussing the dangers posed by the illegal Russian build-up in our country aimed at our territories. We spoke about the distribution of passports and about the illegal bases built on our territories. We knew that those subversive tactics, combined with the ethnic cleansing that had driven most Georgians from those territories, would one day be used as a pretext for invasion. And that is precisely what happened last month. It is also happening in other countries in our neighbourhood.

In 2006, I urgently drew attention to the attempts being made to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and I asked whether any members in this great Hall would tolerate such interference by another Power on their own soil. I warned of the risk that "a Pandora's box will be opened, unleashing violent separatism and conflict not only in the Caucasus but across many parts of our globe" (*A/61/PV.16, p. 4*). Today, unfortunately, we stand at that very precipice, where peace could yield to a pernicious new world order.

One year ago, I came to this Hall with even more distressing news: that an illegal new military base was being built in South Ossetia by those who hoped that arms and violence could triumph over the will of the people. I noted that that dangerous escalation was taking place under the very noses of the international monitors whose job it was to demilitarize the territory, and I asked that those reckless acts be countered. Our warnings continued in the months and weeks before the invasion. We told anyone who would listen about the campaign that had been unleashed to slander Georgia and my Government while blocking any meaningful negotiations with the separatists. That was part of a calculated effort to weaken international support for Georgia and to lay the groundwork for the invasion.

We gave the international community the details of a sharp military build-up by the purported peacekeepers — a build-up that began this spring in both conflict zones, leading to armed attacks this summer by separatist militias. Just before the land invasion began in the early hours of 7 August, after days of heavy shelling that had killed civilians and peacekeepers, we urgently sought to refute claims that 2,100 South Ossetian civilians had been killed by Georgians. That was the excuse used by the invader for what it called a "humanitarian intervention" — a profound perversion of the responsibility to protect. That lie, which was subsequently debunked by Human Rights Watch — which estimated that 44 had been killed — and others, was an attempt to conceal the true motives for the invasion.

Over the years, I have also spoken many times to you about the plans that Georgia has developed, together with the international community, to peacefully reunify my country. I have spoken about the urgent need to replace and transform the failed frameworks for negotiation and peacekeeping in our region. Repeatedly and with sincere intent, I have extended my hand to our large neighbour.

Just a few days before the invasion of Georgia, we continued to work furiously for peace. The Secretary-General had sent his Special Representative to Georgia to determine how to fix the broken process of conflict resolution, and we cooperated closely with him. The German Government had proposed peace talks for mid-August — talks that my Government eagerly supported. The Finnish Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also proposed talks in Helsinki in late July, to which we subscribed. Unfortunately, the opposing parties to the conflict repeatedly turned their backs; they had other plans in mind.

Finally, on the eve of the invasion, my Special Envoy travelled twice in desperation to South Ossetia to plead for peace. His counterpart from our neighbouring country failed to come to those meetings. He cited a flat tire as the reason for not showing up.

Within 24 hours, thousands of very full tires were rolling across the border of my country.

So words alone are not nearly enough. Nor can words accurately convey the horrors of war. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say that anything good can ever come of war. The value of human life is incalculable, and we in Georgia grieve not only for our own lost sons and daughters, but also for our fallen neighbours who were sent in to carry out an unjust aggression of war.

Yet, the international community has emerged from the invasion of my country with something truly valuable: finally, clarity. We understand what has happened. We can no longer deny the motivations and intentions of those actors who instigated the war. With clarity comes responsibility. We no longer have any reason for inaction. Now each of us has a responsibility to act.

Despite the destruction wreaked by the invasion — hundreds dead; nearly 200,000 displaced, according to the United Nations; our economy disabled — my Government is putting our convictions into practice. I promise to you that my Government will implement with all due speed the new democratic initiatives that constitute the second "Rose Revolution". I promise to you that Georgia will soon be stronger and more democratic than ever before, and thus that it will be in a better position to contribute to our collective security and prosperity.

However, if that is to have any meaning, we must together defend the principles on which this institution was built. We need actions, not words. Allow me to repeat once again the four commitments that, I believe, we must make. First, each of us must refuse to stand silently by in the face of this armed aggression, occupation, ethnic cleansing and assault directed against a United Nations Member State. Secondly, we must stand united in rejecting the forced and illegal recognition of Georgia's two separatist provinces and what is essentially their annexation by its neighbour. Thirdly, we must ensure that all parties comply fully with the existing ceasefire agreement. Fourthly, we must resolve to create a meaningful conflict resolution process that will peacefully reunify Georgia and resolve the conflict, in the interest of all ethnic groups and minorities, our society as a whole and the region.

If we can accomplish those goals, then this institution will emerge from this crisis stronger than it was before. If, however, we fail to stop the violent tactics that have subverted State sovereignty in Georgia, they will spread to other parts of the world. It is our collective responsibility to respond with conviction and resolve.

Georgia has made its choice, and our democracy will emerge stronger as a result. Together, we will find ways, as we have over the millennia, to ensure peaceful coexistence among all members of our multiethnic society, be they ethnically Georgian, Abkhaz or Ossetian. We have been a Christian country since the fifteenth century, but we are also a country in which many different religious groups and communities coexist. Diversity is our strength, not a source of our weakness. We are willing to strengthen our diversity even further in order to make my country successful and whole once again, rejuvenated and rebuilt.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): This meeting of the United Nations is being held at a time when there is a rebellion of peoples throughout the world, a rebellion against poverty and destitution and against the effects of climate change, against the privatization policies that have caused the financial crisis.

I wish to tell the Assembly that in Bolivia in recent years we have experienced great uprisings by our people, social movements from the countryside to the cities, of indigenous workers and farmers questioning economic models and systems that simply privatized natural resources and steadily sacked the country. The privatization of basic services and the policies imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not solve anything for the majority of Bolivians. I came to the presidency in 2005 and 2006 as a result of that struggle by the social movements, which was accompanied by an ongoing labour and social struggle by our Bolivian comrades and brothers who were seeking equality and social justice.

With a little experience I can say that in the two and a half years of my Government we have nationalized the natural resources, such as oil and gas, and the economy is beginning to change profoundly. In 2005, before I was elected President, the Bolivian State received only $300 million for its oil and gas resources. Last year, 2007, after nationalization and after we changed the hydrocarbons law, the Bolivian State received $1.93 billion. Being a small country with about 10 million inhabitants, that enabled us to improve the national economy. The recovery of our natural resources is so important that that has been the goal of a historic fight by our peoples.

I wish to speak about some results with regard to social issues and about some profound changes in democracy that took place with the participation of the workers in various social sectors. However — and I am certain that in the last few days the world has been able to grasp this — there is an ongoing conspiracy of small groups against this process of change. I want it known that since the first day of my Government some conservative parties that favour imperialism have consistently tried to weaken us and to wear us down. Last year they requested a referendum to recall the President. I accepted that calmly, and instead of my being recalled, some prefects and some opposition authorities were recalled by the Bolivian people. I received the support of 67 per cent of the people in the recall referendum of 10 August 2008.

I should like to recall something important that our forefathers used to say — our leaders who fought for control of our land, people such as Tupac Catari. In 1741 we were cut into pieces by the Spanish invasion. Before Bolivia was founded and before dying, our leader said, "I die, but I will return transformed into millions of people". For the first time a President of the Bolivians has received more than 2 million votes. So the statement of Tupac Catari, the leader of our ancestors, has come true. But that was part of a process of change in the democracy, with the awareness of the Bolivian people.

After 13, 14 and 15 August, that small group of conservatives began to organize a coup d'état of municipal authorities and prefects against the Government and the State. I will quickly list some of those events. On 14 and 15 August there was a meeting of a so-called national coordinating committee of the right, which attempted to prevent the national authorities from reaching four regions of the country. They attacked the departmental command of the national police, and there was an attack on the police subcommander. A roadblock was set up in four regions to cut off food supplies for the population. Oil installations were surrounded. There was a general attack on institutions, and in four departments 75 government offices were taken over. The State radio and television were silenced, especially the community radios. The airports were taken by those groups.

I remember that, when I was a boy, in the military dictatorships the coups d'état began with takeovers of the State television stations. History is repeating itself, but thanks to the conscience of the Bolivian people this civil coup in Bolivia has been defeated. Thanks to the participation of the nations that have now come together in the Union of South American Nations, this attempted civil coup d'état has been defeated.

Here, I would like to say something. Surely, some participants are waiting for me to tell them why we expelled the United States ambassador. Europe and Latin America repudiated the attempted civilian coup, but the Government of the United States did not, nor has it denounced those acts of terrorism. This morning I heard the statement of the President of the United States condemning terrorism. In Bolivia, right wing groups are setting fire to gas pipelines and cutting off the valves for the export of gas to Brazil and Argentina, but the embassy of the Government of the United States does not condemn such acts of terrorism.

It is not hard to imagine that, if some social movement were to steal his country's national wealth, the United States ambassador would condemn, denounce and repudiate such an act. I would like to

hear the representatives of the United States Government denounce these acts of terrorism. Of course, the terrorists know that the United States is their ally. It is never going to condemn them. The ambassador of the United States was clearly the primary human element conspiring against the United States Government. I remember perfectly the year 2002, when I was a parliamentarian. On the instructions of the United States embassy, I was expelled from Parliament. I was accused of drug trafficking and of being an assassin. In 2002, the United States created a governance programme through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to finance the strengthening of the conservative political parties and put the brakes on a growing political liberation movement, a political movement for the sovereignty of our peoples, a political movement that was designed to bring an end to injustice and to seek equality for Bolivians.

I also remember — some participants may not recall it clearly — that in 2002, when I was called for the first time to be a candidate for the presidency, the United States ambassador said: "Do not vote for Evo Morales. If you vote for Evo Morales, there will be no international aid or international cooperation", thereby instilling fear in the Bolivian people. And they did not stop there. They also said: "Evo Morales is the Andean Bin Laden, and these farmers are the Taliban". Hence, standing before this Assembly is an Andean Bin Laden who represents the Taliban, which is the indigenous farmers' movement that historically fought for its claims.

There are so many accusations of that kind. When we came to power, we found a CIA office in the Government palace. After we discovered it, we had no problem getting rid of it because we had no need for a CIA office in the palace. Obviously, they were operating from there. For example, in 2004, they wanted to force the National Congress to give diplomatic immunity to civilians or members of the Bolivian military. We rejected that, of course, thanks to our social cohesion. In 2005, they began dismantling the military's missiles, together with some commands and, of course, the administration in place at that time.

Dismantling the military is treason; it is not possible that the Southern Command of the United States armed forces would practice such a policy. However, they continuously tried to control some members of the military. For example, in previous Governments, they created a special counter-terrorism force, the F-10, and at one point in time their representatives informed me that, in 2005 or 2004, they were prepared to kill labour or political leaders who opposed capitalism and imperialism.

When I appointed a commander, he was vetoed by the United States embassy. Of course, we are not going to allow any more vetoes. Last year, special firearms munitions were illegally brought into the country at the instigation of the commander of the United States military group, Colonel Campbell. We were told that these were missiles for training purposes. Moreover, they illegally employ young students belonging to United States peace groups to carry out spying activities on officials of the Governments of Cuba and Venezuela. They are working in secret against the Government of Bolivia, thus violating the constitutional rights of their own United States citizens who come to Bolivia on scholarships.

I would point out that when one works for equality and for social justice, one is persecuted and conspired against by certain groups. These groups are not concerned about human equality. It is clear that this is a historic fight for our peoples and that it is nothing new. We can speak about the economy, or about the cost of silver as an industrial commodity, but what we are talking about is the fight between rich and poor. It is the fight between socialism and capitalism. That historic struggle is being resumed now, but I feel that these battles are uprisings and rebellions of peoples against an economic model — against the capitalist system. If we do not understand that capitalism is destroying humanity, then I am sure — and I hope that no one will be offended — that we will not solve the problems of life, the problems of the planet or the problems of humanity.

I am not accusing anyone of being an accomplice of capitalism. From a communal and labour struggle to an electoral one, from organizer to President, I have become perfectly aware that capitalism is the worst enemy of humanity. As I said a few days ago, with great sincerity, while touring my country, I was brought up in social movements among workers, farmers and indigenous peoples. More than 500 years ago, our forefathers fought colonialism and imperialism, and that is why I am anti-imperialist today. No one is going to move me from that position. If people like me, they like me a lot, but if they do not

like me, so be it. What the world is going through is unjust.

So much has been said about climate change, flooding, droughts, how our mountains are losing their snow. If we continue in this way, we will all be responsible for destroying the planet, and thus humankind.

I have heard good statements from other presidents participating in this debate, from which I have learned a great deal; but I am sorry to say that I do not believe that it is enough to simply raise the problems unless we also provide the solutions. I would like to say that some blacklists have been drawn up to punish Governments.

It is difficult to imagine that those terrorists groups are not condemned, while the national Government is decertified for supposedly being involved in drug trafficking. According to United Nations reports, some countries are increasing their coca plantations, but they are not on decertified lists because they are pro-capitalist. To those countries that support the counter-narcotics struggle by reducing their coca cultivation, we did not say that there would be no coca, but that there would be no free cultivation of coca, since the coca leaf does have medicinal and nutritional benefits. Once we clearly defined our anti-imperialist position, we were decertified. However, I am quite sure that this is not about certification or decertification, terrorist or non-terrorist countries.

Mr. Bush, President of the United States, sent me a message recently in which he wrote: "If I am not a friend, I am an enemy". I do not care whether I am a friend of the President of the United States, but I am a friend of the people of the United States. I have had many meetings with representatives from social movements in the United States and we agree on our approach to life and humankind. That is why we have to put an end to blacklists. We are living in times where there are no empires, no dominance or imposition of economic models that can greatly harm countries or continents or the whole world.

I wish to say that we have begun to work on a proposal. It is called "Ten commandments to save the planet, humankind and all life". I hope that my colleagues will distribute this document, and with the participation of all it will help us save the planet, humankind and life. One of the first subjects we raise here is how we can put an end to capitalism. Wherever there is capitalism, there is exploitation. Wherever there is capitalism, our natural resources are plundered. That is what we have seen and experienced.

Our second point is that we must denounce war. As everyone knows, we are working arduously to put Bolivia back on track by drafting a new constitution. In that new political constitution for the Bolivian state, for the first time the State and the people of Bolivia will constitutionally pledge never to initiate war. That does not mean that we renounce defending ourselves. I do not believe in wars.

Speaking of war, I am sure that peoples do not want wars. They do not want the military intervention of any country in any part of the world. In our new political constitution for the Bolivian State, we propose that Bolivia should not accept the military base of any country of the world on its territory. In that way, we shall assert our dignity and defend the sovereignty of Bolivia and of other peoples. I have very respectfully suggested to the people and the Government of the United States that it would be best to withdraw their military from Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of the world as soon as possible. If they do not, the peoples themselves will expel them because interventionism and war are no solution for life and humanity.

Our third point is a proposal for a world without imperialism and colonialism. Last year, I heard a critical issue discussed here by several heads of State. That issue was water — water as a right of all living beings. We also heard discussions on energy and how important it is to have clean, environmentally friendly energy.

Speaking of nature, the indigenous peoples have experience living in harmony with Mother Earth and nature. Mother Earth is neither a shopping centre nor a commodity. Thus, the historic struggle of our peoples is for land and territory, and that struggle is being repeated in our country.

Our next point, as I said earlier, is to Mother Nature within the United Nations. I hope that can be taken into account. I would also note that the new Bolivian political constitution incorporates the ten commandments to save humanity and the world.

Basic services should be human rights. Water, light and telecommunications cannot be in private

hands. If they are human rights, they should be a public service and not left to the private sector. To be sure, we have many differences with multinationals. Investment is certainly important, but we need investors in Bolivia who are not the owners of our energy and our oil, but who are our partners.

My next point is that we should consume only what we need and prioritize local consumption in the context of food sovereignty. We also need to respect the diversity of cultures and economies.

Our final point concerns how to live well. What does it mean to live well? Living well is living in equality, solidarity and complementarity, eliminating inequalities between families and the deep-rooted disparities that exist among countries and continents. When we try to live better, sometimes all we do is to become selfish and ambitious. We never think about the larger family, which, for us in Bolivia, is the whole of Bolivia.

The struggles of peoples for democracy and for the re-establishment of the rule of law is being repeated in Bolivia. In the past, great social movements led by indigenous farmers brought down dictatorships. In recent days, they defeated an attempted coup in Bolivia, and we hail them. We have just been informed that social movements are wisely mobilizing themselves in a search of peace and asking that new standards be adopted to ensure equality be for all Bolivians.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I am convinced that only the conscience of the people can defeat the interests of certain groups and United States imperialism. I heard some leaders this morning sue for peace with a regulated, moderate form of capitalism. I do not believe in that. There will be peace only when there is equality among all human beings; there will be peace only when our identity and the dignity of every people are respected.

I do not think there can be peace with capitalism, no matter how moderate or regulated. We need to work together, we need to participate in the struggles of our peoples for equality. Only Governments and leaders working together with their peoples can find equality. When we have equality, there will be social peace throughout the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We support the priorities that you have identified for this session. I wish to express Namibia's appreciation for your predecessor, Srgjan Kerim, for focusing the agenda of the sixty-second session on matters of crucial importance to Member States. We commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for tirelessly taking up the challenging issues of peace, security and economic development.

The sixty-third session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the global economy is dominated by four interrelated crises. I have in mind the financial crisis in the industrialized countries, the global energy crisis, the devastating impact of climate change as well as the food crisis which has adversely affected poor people around the world. Other, no less daunting, challenges are the HIV/AIDS pandemic, underdevelopment and abject poverty, as well as the need to foster peace and security around the world. We must act decisively and collectively at national, regional and global levels to overcome these challenges.

The devastating effects of climate change have become present-day realities in all parts of the world. Namibia has experienced the negative impact of climate change. The floods and droughts during 2007 and 2008 were some of the most devastating in recent

times. In their wake, they left poor harvests, livestock losses, environmental degradation, damaged infrastructure and destroyed livelihoods, thus putting a severe strain on our plans to invest in new development projects.

Namibia is committed to the Bali road map in order to conclude the negotiations on the post-Kyoto regime by 2009. We call on all parties to honour their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, including the immediate and full capitalization of the Adaptation Fund. Namibia will play its part in the lead-up to Copenhagen.

We want to contribute to making Copenhagen a success in terms of commitments and substantial mitigations, financial instruments for adaptation efforts in developing countries and mechanisms for sharing and harnessing appropriate technologies.

As a net importer of food and fuel, Namibia has been hit hard by the soaring prices of commodities. There will be catastrophic increases in the incidence of hunger, malnutrition and infant mortality in developing countries unless the trend is reversed. That calls for a decisive national, regional and international response. In our case, the Government of Namibia has exempted some basic foodstuffs from value-added tax in order to mitigate the effects of higher prices on food. Such interventions can provide some relief to households. However, there remain long-term challenges, which demand appropriate policies and substantial new investment to raise agricultural productivity and increase food production around the world.

There is a real risk that the gains made by developing countries in poverty reduction and the attainment of the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the years will be reversed if we do not act rapidly.

Global efforts to address the food crisis, the impact of climate change and the drive to achieve the MDGs must go hand in hand. In that regard, we support the proposal for the General Assembly to hold thematic debates until 2015 to take stock of success achieved and setbacks encountered in the achievement of the MDGs.

That will give development cooperating partners an opportunity to account for the fulfilment of their commitments. On the other hand, developing countries should also account for their commitments to strengthen democratic institutions, enhance good governance and fight corruption.

There is a need for genuine political will, especially among donor countries, if the MDGs are to be attained. In this context, open, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial systems must be developed. We call for the intensification of the implementation of the Global Partnership for Development as agreed upon at Monterrey in 2002.

We also appeal to the Bretton Woods system and other international financial institutions to create special mechanisms to enable middle-income countries to access financial resources for development on concessional terms. That was called for by the Windhoek Declaration on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries.

The scourge of poverty is one of the most serious challenges facing humanity today. I believe that, with the requisite political will, poverty can be overcome. Let us act in unity of purpose to address not only the manifestations of poverty, but also its underlying causes, which make communities vulnerable. Let us harness the technological, financial and other resources necessary to eliminate the dehumanizing effects of poverty on all members of the human family.

Peace and security as well as social justice are paramount to the achievement of the MDGs and to the resolution of conflicts. In that regard, all countries must commit themselves to implement the policies that promote economic growth, social justice, the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and the protection of the environment, in order to guarantee durable peace and security.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On 15 September 2008, the political leaders of Zimbabwe signed a power-sharing agreement designed to restore political and economic stability to their country. We wish to congratulate the leaders of Zimbabwe on that important milestone and to express the hope that it will put that sister country on the path towards economic recovery. We commend the mediation efforts of the Southern African Development Community, led by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, who invested extraordinary skill, time and energy in the process. We urge the international community to support the implementation of the

agreement by providing economic, financial and humanitarian assistance. We call for the immediate lifting of all sanctions that have been imposed on that country.

My delegation is concerned that the question of Western Sahara remains unresolved. We support the ongoing direct talks between the parties under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We also call for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Western Sahara and of all relevant United Nations resolutions providing for a free and fair referendum in that territory. Namibia is also concerned about the conflict situations in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in Somalia. We urge the respective parties to those conflicts to work to find lasting peace.

The people of Palestine have an inalienable right to self-determination. Namibia is concerned about the lack of progress in the negotiations on the question of Palestine. We call for the immediate implementation of all United Nations resolutions on Palestine and for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine living side by side with Israel.

My delegation reiterates the call that we have made on several occasions in this House for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. Not only is the blockade against international law; its extraterritorial nature impedes free trade and economic development. Namibia calls for the implementation of all resolutions of the General Assembly calling for the lifting of the blockade.

If we are to be able to respond effectively to the manifold challenges of our time, we must accelerate the reform of the United Nations. Member States should work with resolve to strengthen our Organization and to ensure that it delivers in terms of its mandate. However, the process will not be complete without reform of the Security Council. We have an obligation to make the Council more representative, democratic and accountable. It is an anomaly, and it is unjust, that Africa does not have permanent representation on the Security Council. Namibia reiterates the African common position on Council reform as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. Intergovernmental negotiations on reform should commence without any further delay.

It is our duty to ensure that the United Nations remains true to its unique universal character and that it becomes a source of hope for a more secure and peaceful world for current and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): I warmly congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Benin, my country, will make its modest contribution to the work of this session and will strive to promote the ideals of the Charter, to which my country here reaffirms its full commitment. His predecessor strove to find ideal solutions to the great challenges facing humankind during his mandate. We pay tribute to him for his good and faithful service to the international community.

I also wish to commend the diligent and resolute efforts of the Secretary-General, who has understood the scope of the grave crises that have shaken the world over the past year. Thanks to his bold initiatives to promote international cooperation, he has been able to revive the virtue of multilateralism as the best way to manage world affairs in an inclusive and participatory framework highlighting the uniqueness of our world and the shared responsibility of the human species to maintain the fundamental equilibriums on which its survival on the Earth and the permanence of the biosphere depend.

In 2007, responding to the alarm raised by the scientific community, we focused our attention on

climate change as a global problem affecting the environment on our planet, with far-from-rosy prospects for the future of humankind and obvious consequences in our daily lives. The two major crises that we have been attempting to contain for several months are unfolding against that backdrop. The energy and food crises, both of which are on our agenda, are two of the world's most serious crises in recent history. They mark a departure from our previous certainty as regards uninterrupted and lasting supplies of energy and food for our peoples.

The Secretary-General has demonstrated outstanding leadership by sounding the alarm and warning us of the risks of hasty and non-viable responses that could lead to panic and serve to exacerbate the situation. The Rome Conference organized under the aegis of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations made it possible to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the complexity of the crisis and to develop an outline for a comprehensive strategy. That strategy includes immediate steps to address the emergency, as well as several cohesive measures in the short, medium and long term to preserve peace and stability in vulnerable developing States. Those are the countries most affected by the food crisis, which undermines their efforts to combat poverty and hunger.

The response to the food crisis emergency should not lead us to lose sight of the timetable for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community has a duty to mobilize the necessary resources to correct the serious distortions that are at the heart of the food crisis. Our performance in that regard could be improved if vulnerable countries were able to make the investments necessary to relaunch agricultural production throughout the world in a sustainable manner.

In addition, there is a need to maintain sustained growth rates that can produce prosperity and sustainable human development in the long term. We must continue to work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and make them a lasting reality.

In this emergency, the United Nations should bring to bear all its influence in order to help countries experiencing difficulties ensure the survival of threatened and vulnerable segments of the population, who risk being decimated by hunger and famine if no one comes to their aid.

The time has therefore come to give concrete expression to the right to food. It is intolerable that hunger continues to be a scourge afflicting humankind in the twenty-first century. In the short term, priority should be given to strengthening social protection systems in least developed countries. Our efforts should make it possible to activate the dormant potential of local productive capacity in order to stimulate small and medium-sized businesses. Problems must be addressed through an integrated approach that makes it possible to maximize agricultural production, as well as of preserving, bringing to market and distributing food crops in order to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups of the population, whose welfare we must effectively ensure. In the medium and long terms, we must rethink agricultural investment policies in order to re-establish the balance between cash crops and food production, so as to ensure food security for States while taking cultural specificities into consideration.

Overall, this crisis illustrates that humankind is not well equipped to manage the consequences of the unfolding emergency. This proves that we are not doing enough for the future and that we run the risk of being subject to all sorts of ills. It is for that reason that the proposal made by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis for an increase in the proportion of official development assistance allocated to agriculture from 3 to 10 per cent constitutes a strategic approach that should be implemented with common political will commensurate with the stakes involved. I would like to pay tribute to the countries that have already made firm commitments to provide additional resources in that regard.

Benin is being seriously affected by the food crisis, but we are resolutely committed to undertaking the necessary reforms. To that end, in 2006, my Government launched a national agricultural modernization programme in order to address heightened distortions. To date, agriculture in Benin has been characterized by small-scale family farms and based on the use of outdated equipment. In order to change that situation, which has confined food production to subsistence farming, a year ago my Government initiated a mechanization programme to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

Given that that mechanization alone cannot bring about the expected results without the marshalling of water resources, we are considering a programme for

rational water management to better utilize that resource while preserving it for the future. The goal is to promote irrigation agriculture, primarily by building irrigation dams in valleys in the north of our country as part of an overall development plan.

Soil degradation, coastal erosion and the combined effects of frequent flooding due to climate change that seriously affect all of West Africa are among the underlying factors contributing to the drop in local food production. In that connection, I should like to express our great appreciation for the awareness-raising efforts of the secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Financing mechanisms, including the World Bank's Adaptation Fund, must function with a heightened sense of the urgent need for aid to affected regions. They should promote the implementation of soil regeneration projects, irrigation agriculture and reforestation with species that will increase the availability of basic foodstuffs.

As part of efforts to promote diversification in the agriculture sector, my Government also intends to encourage the cultivation of crops suitable for biofuels on marginally arable lands. The goal is to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, which has become more acute following the dramatic drop in the generating capacity of hydropower plants as a result of climate change, whose impact has seriously affected economic activity in my country over the past two years. These difficulties have been exacerbated by the dizzying rise in oil prices.

The tax cuts and import subsidies to which my country has resorted in order to protect the buying power of taxpayers have had a negative impact on public finances. Those stop-gap measures are simply not sustainable in the long-run.

This year we are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Benin initiated resolution 62/171, which the General Assembly adopted to proclaim the International Year of Human Rights Learning, which will begin on 10 December 2008. My country proposed that new approach in order to once again place the human person at the very centre of sustainable human development efforts. Human rights learning leads to increased demands for human rights, which society is supposed to provide. It is the duty of the international community to guarantee them. We call upon all Member States to give real effect to the International Year, in line with their national specificities, as well as to take all the steps they believe necessary to promote ownership and the effective enjoyment of human rights by all individuals on their territory.

The activities that will take place during the International Year of Human Rights Learning will provide additional impetus to the efforts we have undertaken to ensure that all citizens subscribe to the Millennium Development Goals, especially in Africa, where the risk of not meeting the Goals by the established deadline is the greatest.

We welcome the recommendations of the Steering Group for achieving the MDGs in Africa. Benin is honoured to be one of the 10 pilot countries chosen. Benin has begun to integrate the concept of "united in action" within the framework of its cooperation with the United Nations system and eagerly awaits its inclusion in the second group of test countries for the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence. This will enable us to develop synergies to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

At the national level, we have integrated the achievement of the MDGs into our national development strategies, which are based on attaining those Goals as part of a sustainable development process focused on and sustained by our nation and aimed at supporting economic growth, which will enable us to achieve lasting success.

We welcome the ongoing consideration of ways to enhance the effectiveness of development assistance, and we hope that this will enable us to develop a consensus vision on the best possible way to revitalize the global partnership for development, with the ultimate objective, in our view, of reducing the scandalous inequalities which still afflict humankind.

It is clear that democratization of the United Nations and the promotion of the rule of law at an international level are endeavours which will contribute to the effective and efficient participation of all peoples in managing world affairs, for the benefit of present and succeeding generations. The promotion of the rule of law at the international level requires the increased representation of developing States in the decision-making bodies of the international financial institutions, as well as a redefinition of their

institutional mandates to ensure that better use is made of them to mobilize resources for the development of the least developed countries, while preserving the stability of the international financial system.

The democratization of the United Nations also includes the long-awaited reform of the Security Council. As a hostage of the inherent contradictions of today's international relations, it has remained hopelessly stuck, even though it is recognized as being of cardinal importance to the effectiveness of the Organization. The negotiations to that end should be carried out with a heightened sense of responsibility. We must ensure equitable representation of Member States within the Security Council. I reiterate here the legitimate demands of Africa, as expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus, within the framework of reform aimed at ensuring transparency, legitimacy and increased effectiveness of the Council's decisions as it discharges its primary role in maintaining international peace and security. The democratization of the United Nations also means a firmer commitment by Member States to respect international and national legality.

In conclusion, I wish to make an urgent appeal to all parties to the armed conflicts that continue in various hotspots throughout the world, whether they be in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America or Africa, to choose the path of peace and dialogue and to respect democratic values.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Benin for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.